MATERIALISM RE-STATED

COHEN

WORKS BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

RELIGION AND SEX.—A Systematic survey of the relations between the Sexual instinct and morbid mental states, and the sense of religious exaltation. Price 6s.

THEISM OR ATHEISM? The Great Alternative. Price 3s. 6d.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. Price 5s.

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL. Price 2s. 6d.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.—With an Analysis of the phenomena of Spiritualism. Price 3s. 6d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. Price 2s. 6d.

MATERIALISM RE-STATED

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

LONDON:
THE PIONEER PRESS,
61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

1927.

Printed and Published by
THE PIONEER PRESS
(G. W. Foote & Co., Ltd.)
61 Farringdon St., London
E.C.4.

PREFACE.

The famous Bishop South was once complimented by Queen Anne on a sermon to the delivery of which she had just listened. But, she added, "It was very short." "Madam," replied the bishop, "It would have been shorter had I had the time to make it so." Something of this kind must be my apology for trying to pack so great a subject into so small a space. Short as this book is, it would have been shorter had I possessed the capacity to make it so. Given the capacity to scribble, nothing is easier than to write a big book. One can be very diffuse, and this helps to cover defects in thinking. On the other hand, a short book concentrates the reader's attention, it also compels the writer to clarify his thoughts under penalty of discovery. With judicious "padding" any one of the following chapters could have been expanded easily to four times its present size. I should not have said more that was worth reading, I should only have taken greater space in which to say it. And in the end the reader would have been left in some doubt as to what it was all about. I am a strong believer in small books. If a reader does not understand a small book on a great subject, a larger book is not likely to have any better result. If he does grasp what is set down, he will have had a survey of the country, and he can explore it in detail at his own time and in his own way.

What I have here attempted is to give a bird's-eye view of one of the oldest and one of the most controverted subjects in the history of philosophy. There is none other that has aroused so much bitter opposition; and that opposition has been almost entirely theological in origin. It has been said by one writer on philosophy, that the Materialism of the ancients would not have aroused so much opposition but for the "irrevelant denial of a religious belief." That seems to me like saying that Materialism would not have aroused opposition had it not been opposed to something. For I do not agree that the at least practical denial of the agency of the Gods was irrelevant. As I have tried to show, for science to exist thought needed to shake itself free from theological control. That the challenge was explicit instead of implicit was due to the freedom of speculation in the ancient Greek world. In a world where the "law" of natural changes was universally found in the will of this or that God, no great step could be taken without challenging theistic belief. And in earlier days the belief in religion was too strong for opposition to be avoided, as is the case to-day, by paying lip homage to a deity, while divesting him of every shred of usefulness. And whether we are dealing with ancient or modern times, it should be quite clear that you cannot put forward an explanation of the changes which take place in the universe as a consequence of the interaction of forces inherent in the substance of things, without reducing "God" to a nullity. A God who does nothing might just as well not exist.

The thoroughness of the Materialistic challenge was such that it has never admitted of anything in the nature of a compromise. Had this been possible, hard-pressed theologians might have attempted to deal with Materialism as they have tried to adapt themselves to the theory of evolution. The battle over Evolution was short, sharp, and decisive. The course of a single generation saw it accepted by scientific men throughout the civilized world, with theologians tumbling over each other to explain that, rightly considered, evolution made for a nobler belief in God, and was thoroughly harmonious with the deeper truths of religion. This was, of course, rubbish; but the majority of scientific men were only too anxious to be at peace with the religious world, and although they may have stuck their tongues in their cheeks, and expressed their real opinions privately, in public they solemnly accepted what was offered. No such course was possible with Materialism. You could not pretend that everything depended upon God when all the time you were demonstrating that everything went on without him. It was too absurd to worry about a God in a world where all that occurs is the result of the composition of natural and eternally existing forces. The belief in God does not live on the possibility that once upon a time he may have done something; nor does worship thrive with a God who has not the power to gratify the wishes of his devotees.

Present-day theologians—time having robbed them of the power to meet the Materialist with the stake or the prison—have adopted another plan. In the latter

half of the nineteenth century they loudly asserted that Materialism was scientifically unsound. But they had the mortification of seeing materialistic conclusions accepted by men of science, and, worse still for the theologians, to see the principle of Materialism universally adopted by them. So for some years another plan has been tried. This is to set up the cry that the Materialism of the nineteenth century is dead. It is no longer accepted by leading and responsible thinkers. Those who would stand well with the clergy, journalists who are as competent to talk about Materialism as a cow is to express an opinion on the causes of an eclipse, repeat the cry, and by dint of continuously advertising the alleged fact the man in the street decides that this terrible Materialism, whatever it may be, is no longer believed in by those who ought to know all about it. How wide of the truth this is I leave it for readers of the following pages to decide. Certainly some theories once held by leading Materialists may no longer be acceptable. Conceptions of "matter" and "force" may need revision. But such things are no more fatal to Materialism than the replacement of the Ptolemaic system by the Copernican was fatal to the science of astronomy. The essence of Materialism lies in the simple statement that every phenomenon in the universe is the consequent of a composition of natural forces. It is this that the anti-materialist has to disprove. If he can do this he will have destroyed Materialism. But he will at the same time have destroyed the possibility of a science of nature. From the point of view of science it is a case of Materialism or chaos.

CONTENTS.

	Page
PREFACE	v.
CHAPTER I.	
A QUESTION OF PREJUDICE	11
CHAPTER II.	
SOME CRITICS OF MATERIALISM	17
CHAPTER III.	
MATERIALISM IN HISTORY	24
CHAPTER IV.	
WHAT IS MATERIALISM?	45
CHAPTER V.	
SCIENCE AND PSEUDO-SCIENCE	60
CHAPTER VI.	
THE MARCH OF MATERIALISM	79
CHAPTER VII.	
ON CAUSE AND EFFECT	89
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE PROBLEM OF PERSONALITY	103

MATERIALISM RE-STATED.

CHAPTER I.

A Question of Prejudice.

IN theory there does not seem any valid reason why Materialism should not be discussed as dispassionately as any other question of pure science. In practice, it seldom occurs. It is repudiated rather than rejected; denounced more often than it is argued against. Passion and prejudice are, indeed, shown in the way it is introduced into a discussion. It is seldom mere materialism that is being criticized, but nearly always "crass" materialism, or "crude" materialism, or Materialism qualified by some other deprecatory epithet. One may be excused, therefore, for suspecting that Materialism is opposed because it is hated, rather than because it is believed to be untrue. People are afraid as much on account of what it removes as on account of what it establishes. Its enemies are more afraid of discovering it to be true than they are concerned in proving it to be false.

So curious a position is worthy of an attempt at explanation; nor is it very difficult to discover the root

of this bitter antagonism. It is to be found in the sharp contrast of two utterly irreconcilable modes of thought. Science begins in the attempt to reduce an apparent chaotic assemblage of natural happenings to order, to formulate "laws" that will describe what transpires, and enable man to predict what will occur as the inevitable result of the play of natural forces. But in doing this it has to meet an antagonist that is in possession of the field, entrenched behind the ramparts of custom, and buttressed by the fears of the crowd. Henceforward, Naturalism and Supernaturalism stand as opposed forms of thought, fighting for the mastery of the intellectual world.

Between the two there is no half-way house; no accommodation is possible. There is no border-land of ambiguous phrases, or hazy beliefs such as would admit of at least a friendly compromise. Naturalism can gain ground only at the expense of Supernaturalism. It is true that nowadays a discredited Supernaturalism would gladly share the disputed territory and would freely hand over the whole region of the inorganic world to Naturalism, if it may only retain command of the world of life and thought. But this, Naturalism cannot admit. Its aim is to conquer the whole realm of science, from star-dust to planet, from the tiniest speck of living matter up to the highest output of the human mind. Its claim is to rule over the world of human thought, as well as over the physical universe. The utmost that Supernaturalism has to hope for, is a lingering rule over a diminishing territory, with the certain prospect of complete dispossession at the end.

The leaders of the religious world have never been in any real doubt on this point; they have fought this uncompromising enemy with the utmost of their strength. They have brought to the fight all the tricks of a never too scrupulous body of controversialists, working upon the inbred fear that semi-civilized humanity has of its tribal gods. They said, with truth, that Materialism was an attempt to take the control of the universe out of the hands of the gods. Greek thinkers had to face this charge in the morning of the history of philosophy; Kepler, Copernicus, Newton, Lyell, and Darwin in modern times. Materialism was made one of the most accursed words in the religious vocabulary. Depending upon normal humanity's dislike to careful thinking, Materialism was persistently identified with loose living, and was thundered against, now with theological curses, now in terms of moral indignation. Religious controversialists strove, it must be admitted with some success, to make the Materialist a religious outcast and an ethical pariah.

"Give a dog a bad name . . ." The rest was easy. The course of human evolution has placed a value upon physical courage, and man is a rare fighting animal. But the influence of established religion has placed an enormous value upon mere conformity, and has so kept the level of moral courage very low. Attack a doctrine as bad, low, degrading, and at once there are crowds of men and women who fear association with it. They will not trouble to find out whether the bad name is deserved or not, it is enough that it is given. Their sole anxiety will be to escape

the imputation of keeping evil company. In this respect education has not a very great effect. Nothing but the fear of theological prejudice will explain why so many scientific workers, whose whole work takes Materialism for granted, take such elaborate care to explain to the world that they are not Materialists. The theologian does not hesitate to use his power, and the ordinary publicist or scientist is afraid to brave it. Some will explain that they do not use the term Materialist because it is so much misunderstood. And that simply encourages the priest to go on as he has been going. When Charles Bradlaugh was urged to take some name other than Atheist for the reason that the term was open to misunderstanding, he replied that this was an additional reason for keeping it. But all are not Bradlaughs; and many who find themselves drifting into an unfashionable heresy, will be seen trying to discover some remnants of grace that will commend them to the orthodoxy they are forsaking.

Thanks to these circumstances the champions of Supernaturalism have always found "Materialism" a very useful brick to heave at their opponents. During the war, when we were opposed to one of the most Christian nations in Europe, it suited the clergy to talk at large about the war being due to Germany's Materialism, and thus enlist the ignorance and jingoism of the mob against Naturalism. If there is danger threatened to the industrial life of the nation, it is due to the spread of Materialism. If there is an outcry over some alleged increase of crime, it is at once attributed to the same cause. And all the time

the fact that among no people in the world is mere money and brute strength so worshipped as among the Christian nations, and that none are more ready to prostitute the discoveries of science to the end of waging war or to the mere amassing of wealth, is quietly ignored.

The trick is transparent. In the first instance, the term is used in an ethical sense as implying the craving for mere sensual pleasures. Having gained assent here, the next step is to switch over the feelings thus aroused to a condemnation of scientific materialism, which is a different thing altogether. It is nothing to the average pietist to point out that if there is a disinterested class in the country it is to be found among scientific workers. We are not yet sufficiently enlightened to hold out prizes for the serious student of science. He can look forward to none of the "plums" which reward the successful politician, the victorious general, or the fashionable preacher. He works hard, he dies poor, and while his work remains an enduring and a valuable heritage of the race, so far as the mass of the people are concerned, he rests in an unknown grave. And it is left for a clergy, who can only rise to the level of a concerted enthusiasm when it is a question of securing higher salaries or greater power, to prate of the (ethical) materialism of science.

It has indeed been the fate of Materialism to suffer at the hands of both its friends and its enemies. At the hands of its enemies, because of the reasons already given, and at those of its friends, as a consequence of sheer misunderstanding. Too often the

fatal mistake has been made to take a statement of Materialism as laid down by anti-materialists, with the result that the Materialist has been found defending positions he need not defend, and accepting statements of his case that reduce it almost to an absurdity. One writer jumps off with the remark that Materialism stands or falls by the atomic theory of matter, or that we are bound as Materialists to explain mental phenomena in terms of matter and motion, and we at once find Materialists who accept the statements and set about defending them. But it does not follow that a Materialist is bound to defend a conception of matter current a couple of centuries ago, or indeed that he need bother about "matter" at all. How we are to conceive matter it is the business of science to determine; and we are at liberty to modify our conception just as developing knowledge may demand. Our chief concern here should be to make quite sure what it is that matter stands for in a sound, scientific philosophy. Above all, it is a useful plan to follow the legal rule of carefully examining the indictment to which we have to plead. Otherwise we may find ourselves answering an indictment that has no legal warranty whatever. Had both these rules been followed, many defences of Materialism would certainly never have been written, and the inconsequential character of many criticisms of Materialism would have been made clear.

CHAPTER II.

Some Critics of Materialism.

A VERY large book might be filled by setting down and replying to the various misstatements of Materialism that have been drawn up from time to time. I have no intention of doing this, but it will help to clear the air if a few representative specimens are taken. The first example is a very recent one from Lord Balfour, who has somehow or the other managed to gain the reputation of an able philosophic thinker. In a quite recent utterance (Introduction to *Science, Religion and Reality*, 1925) he says, with a charming categorical finality :—

> We are spiritual beings, and must take account of spiritual values. The story of man is something more than a mere continuation of the story of matter. It is different in kind. If we cannot calculate the flow of physical events, that is because our knowledge of natural processes is small, and our power of calculation feeble. If we cannot calculate the course of human history, that is because (among other reasons) it is inherently incalculable.

It is not easy to disentangle a statement of this kind, because one is not quite certain what it means, and one may be forgiven the suspicion that this uncertainty extends, in all probability, to the author of it. If Lord Balfour means that a Materialist holds that the story of human nature may be ex-

pressed in terms of physics, the statement is too scientifically absurd to require confutation. But if he does not mean that, what does he mean? If, by spiritual beings, Lord Balfour means that man is capable of ethical feelings and you must take account of ethical "values," the reply is that Materialism fully allows for that. If it means that the psychic side of human life evidences the existence of a "soul," one would much like to have the proofs. At any rate it is hardly a proposition to be laid down as though it ranked as an axiom.

In the concluding sentences I am not sure whether Lord Balfour speaks of calculating in the sense of forecasting or not. In any case, he quite correctly ascribes whatever inability exists in this direction to our lack of knowledge. But when we turn to human nature, the difficulty, instead of being attributed to the same cause, and to the enormous complexity of the factors involved, the inability to forecast human history exists because it is *inherently* incapable of calculation. And that is a statement both scientifically unsound, and logically absurd. We do calculate the course of human history when we say that the war-like policy of one of the European powers will sooner or later lead to war, or when we say that by making the tax on whisky too high there will be a diminution in the consumption of that kind of drink. We calculate the actions of human beings in a thousand different ways, both individually and in the mass. Granted, this is not done with the accuracy with which an astronomer calculates the course of a comet; that, again, is a question of our ignorance,

not of the absence of causation. Perhaps the most interesting thing about Lord Balfour's statement is the implied admission that opposition to Materialism must rest upon a denial of universal causation. And in that he is true to type.

My next example is from Professor Needham, the eminent Cambridge bio-chemist, who, after admitting that "the triumph of mechanistic biology has been indeed a real one, for it has succeeded in abolishing the vital force which so unnecessarily complicated the whole question," concludes that "Mind and all mental processes cannot receive explanation or description in physico-chemical terms." We shall have occasion later to deal with this particular fallacy, but for the present it is enough to say that Professor Needham, like Lord Balfour, is tilting at windmills. A scientist of his standing should, however, be on his guard against such a radical misunderstanding of scientific method as is implied in the passage cited. It should be enough to ask him : If it *were* possible to explain mental processes in physico-chemical terms, where would be the need for "laws" of biology or of psychology? The very existence of such laws are enough to prove that his criticism harbours a gross fallacy. The only need for a law is to provide a descriptive formula of what is observed to be the fact; and science, by framing laws of psychology, announces that laws of chemistry and physics will not cover the new range of facts. But that again has not anything to do with the soundness of Materialism.

My third example is from a book on *Mind and Matter,* written by Mr. C. E. M. Joad. Mr. Joad

writes as the champion of a somewhat out-of-date vitalism, and aims at presenting philosophy in a way to be comprehended by the common man. But if the common man has no greater grasp of the matter than has Mr. Joad, his enlightenment is not likely to be very great. Mr. Joad sets out with the categorical statement that the Mechanistic or Materialistic view of the universe has broken down; and, in the first few pages of his book, gives us the following items of information :—

> Until recent years the prevalent view among scientists was that whatever existed in the universe obeyed the laws that were known to operate in the world of matter . . . Mind was a form of matter . . . The universe . . . is conceived as a gigantic clock. Somebody or something at some time or other wound the clock up. How the winding-up process came to pass, of course, nobody knows; certainly not the Mechanist . . . Many physiologists came to regard mind as a rarified material essence surrounding the brain like the halo round the head of a saint.

It is rather difficult to deal seriously with such an unphilosophic and hopelessly unscientific jumble of words, but I will try to do so, because Mr. Joad is saying in a clumsy way what many others say more carefully. His method may be described as consisting in attributing a series of ridiculous statements to his opponents, and then proceeding to prove them to be absurd. And of course the statements are absurd—but the absurdity belongs to Mr. Joad.

To begin with, one would dearly like to know what scientist believed or taught that everything that existed in the universe obeyed only the "laws" of matter. Surely the most materialistic of scientists never denied the laws of biology? And if they did

not, how could they possibly have held that only the laws of matter operated? Just a little idea of what are the functions of scientific laws would have prevented the writing of that sentence. Not less remarkable is the Materialist who believes that the universe was once wound up like a clock. Seeing that the Materialist has always insisted that a beginning to the universe is an unthinkable proposition, while the Vitalist, or Theist, has always asserted that at one time the universe was actually set going "like a clock," it is clear that Mr. Joad has got the positions a little mixed.

But his crowning absurdity is in the final sentence cited: "Many physiologists came to regard mind as a form of matter surrounding the brain like the halo round a saint's head." Mind, says the Materialist, is a function of the organism. Who is the physiologist, who after saying this, went on to say that the function was another form of the organism? Again, contractility is a function of muscular tissue. So says everyone. But who believes that contractility hangs round the muscle like a halo round a saint's head? How does a function hang like a halo round an organ? Perhaps Mr. Joad may explain. Of course, the Materialist may be quite wrong when he asserts that thought is a function of the organism, but it would require a far better informed mind and a far more acute reasoner than Mr. Joad to prove him to be so. Mind as a rarified form of matter, a function hanging round an organ, is quite the funniest thing in a pretendedly scientific book that has appeared for many a day.

A final illustration of yet another form of fallacy may be taken from Maeterlinck. Following a common line, he says that Science,

> . . . has recently been compelled to admit that no such thing exists as dead matter, and that a pebble, a lump of lava, sterilized by the fiercest of internal fires, is endowed with an intromolecular activity which is absolutely fantastic, expending in its internal vortices an energy which would be capable of hauling whole railway trains round and round the globe. Now what is this activity, this energy, if not an undeniable form of the universal life?

Maeterlinck is not a man of science, and some licence may be granted him. But, alas, there are many others who write in the same way in professedly scientific works. Again, I do not know anyone entitled to speak in the name of Materialism who ever conceived matter to exist apart from energy, and even if they did, it would be manifestly unfair to take a generally discarded and old-fashioned view of matter and insist upon Materialists holding it for ever. Further, it is quite clear that "dead" matter was never spoken of save to distinguish it from matter that was "alive." Moreover, when science speaks of the inertia of matter, it does not imply an absence of energy at all, it means only that matter will persist in a given state unless something—some re-arrangement of its internal energies, or the incidence of some external force occurs to disturb it. And that is not a mere assumption; it is an axiom. It is a necessity of thought. Change in any direction, or with anything, implies a cause of change—in other words, a new conjuncture of forces necessitating a new balance.

For the rest, one may note the familiar appeal to man's sense of wonderment—as though one part of nature were intrinsically more wonderful than another—and then having administered the narcotic, quietly to take "energy" as an equivalent of universal life. There is nothing here other than the usual religious appeal for the support of sheer ignorance, and it ought not to impose upon anyone. Yet it does, apparently, impose upon millions. And the same people who thus set one part of nature against another on account of its greater degree of wonderfulness, will be found quoting with approval Tennyson's "Flower in the crannied wall," thus subscribing to the saner view that any part of nature is equal to any other part in the degree of wonder or "mystery" it exhibits.

Finally, there is not the slightest justification for supposing that the form which energy assumes in the universe at large is identical with the specialized form of energy which we find exemplified in living organisms. When such a claim has been made on behalf of Materialism, it has been strenuously denied. When it is said on behalf of supernaturalism, it is passed without comment. Physical energy and vital energy belong to two different scientific categories, and energy "in itself" is just about as intelligible and as useful as the metaphysical "thing in itself." It is standing science on its head. In fact, it is not science at all. It is not philosophy. It is just nonsense; and the fact that a man justifiably occupying a lofty position in the world of letters utters it, ought not to prevent our calling it by its proper name.

CHAPTER III.

Materialism in History.

CONVENIENTLY one may consider Materialism under two different aspects. There is, first, its historical significance; second, its scientific meaning. The two overlap and influence each other, of course, and we shall have more than once to note the danger of separating things in thought that are not separated in fact. The movement of life is a continuous synthesis; it is the function of philosophy to understand by a continuous analysis. So it is well to take the historical position first, because that will enable us the more fully to realize what it is that Materialism has always stood for. Moreover, the logical order is not always the historical one, and it may be that only after a considerable time ideas are arranged in the order to which they logically belong. Neither is it quite safe to set down a mere definition of a leading or an important word. Words are, so to speak, functions of thought, and it is to thought we must go to find out their true significance. It is in the evolution of words that we find their true nature and function; dictionaries often register no more than a passing phase of meaning.

The mental life of man begins in a world of illusion. The stars, so far away that a ray of light, travelling

at an almost incredible speed, takes years to reach us, seem almost within grasping distance. The earth is certainly flat. Disease is the work of evil spirits; good fortune that of beneficent ones. The air, the woods, the waters, are peopled with ghostly forms that haunt man's footsteps, and to gain whose goodwill is a matter of life or death. In the medley of existing forces there appears no co-ordination; everything bears the hall mark of caprice. Dreams ape the part of realities, and realities take on the appearance of a nightmare. Words usurp the place of things, and things have no clear relation to each other. Inconstancy appears to reign where later knowledge shows constancy to be the rule. If the world had been created by some almighty power, with the deliberate intention of deceiving and misleading man, it could not have been better devised. For long ages so far as men thought about things their conclusions were fundamentally wrong. Gods and ghosts were the prime movers. They were everywhere. It was the golden age of religion, and human life stood as a parenthesis between the ghost world out of which it came, and the ghost world into which it went.

Before a *science* of nature could commence, the universal reign of the gods had to be questioned and curtailed. It was one of the conditions of progress. Until that was accomplished very little could be done. So soon as this step was taken, and the challenge offered, there began the first great cleavage in the mental life of man, a cleavage at the side of which, as Tylor rightly says, all others are unimportant. Naturalism stood opposed to Supernatural-

ism. That was the fundamental division in the dawn of science; it remains the fundamental division to-day. The fight for the interpretation of nature still lies between the Naturalist and the Supernaturalist. It is true that to-day no one gives complete adherence to supernaturalism. Its most hardened supporter is willing to concede the soundness of the Naturalistic interpretation within certain limits. But there are various attempts to draw lines of demarcation, and under the guise of "mysticism" and much pseudo-philosophizing a diluted supernaturalism prevails. Still, Naturalism and Supernaturalism are the logically contrasted poles of thought. Between them the essential battle is being fought. All else are affairs of outposts; and the one feature of this age-long contest has been the steady advance of Naturalism.

It is to the credit of ancient Greece, that the first step towards the foundation of a science of nature was taken in that country. Some amount of positive knowledge must have been present in very early human society—how otherwise could life have maintained itself? The qualities of special things were noted, and the influence of certain conditions on human life. In the case of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and others, there existed a very considerable body of acquired knowledge, and a high development in the arts of life. But, as Burnett and others have pointed out, there is a great distinction between the existence of knowledge concerning particular groups of facts, and a scientific conception of natural processes. It is true that science must rest upon a knowledge of facts and the relations between them, but

the mere collecting of facts no more entitles a man to be called a scientific thinker, than a collection of famous pictures by a Chicago meat packer suffices to make him a specialist in art. Facts are the raw material of science; it is the use made of them, the manner in which they are handled, that creates science.

That the Greeks were able to take this important step may partly be explained by the fact that they were not burdened by anything in the shape of a "sacred" literature. What this meant as a shackle upon investigation and free discussion, the history of Europe, ever since the establishment of Christianity, shows. Under its malign influence many important discoveries were lost sight of altogether, while every man who attempted an independent investigation of natural phenomena, and published the results, was made to feel the vengeance of the Christian Church. From Roger Bacon to Darwin, the story runs with the same melancholy burden, and even to-day the number of scientific investigators are not few who feel they must go out of their way to make announcements to all whom it may concern, that their discoveries are not of necessity hostile to the Christian religion.

At any rate, it is surely not without significance that the people with whom it may be said the foundations of science were laid, were without a sacred literature, and in whose literature, as Professer Singer has pointed out, there has survived not a single work by a priest. Whatever difficulties the Greek thinker had to face, he had not to dread being

dragged before an Inquisition composed of ignorant priests, and risking imprisonment, or even death, for having broken some of the canons of the Church, or controverted some of the teachings of Holy writ.*

The peculiar and valuable contribution of the Greek mind to the intellectual development of mankind is that it was the first, so far as is known, to set out on that search for some general "law" of the changes everywhere going on. Consciously or unconsciously this involved a direct challenge to supernaturalism, since it meant lifting things out of the control of the "Gods," and reducing nature to a completely deterministic order.† All things were constantly changing. So much was quite clear. What was the "law" of

* It is interesting to record, some 2,000 years later than the time of which we are writing, the sentence pronounced upon Galileo—just thirty-two years after Bruno had been burned for astronomical speculations that would have passed without comment among either the Greeks or the Romans. "Having seen and maturely considered the merits of your case with your confessions and excuses, and everything else which ought to be seen and considered, we pronounce, judge, and declare that you have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of heresy in that (*a*) you have believed and held the doctrine (which is false and contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures) that the sun is centre of the world and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move and it is not the centre of the world; and (*b*) that an opinion can be held and defended as probable after it has been decreed contrary to the Holy Scriptures; and, consequently, that you have incurred all the censures and penalties enjoined in the sacred canons and other general and particular codes against delinquents of this description. . . . And as a warning to others to abstain from delinquencies of this sort, we decree that the book, *Dialogue of Galileo Galilei*, be prohibited by public edict, and we condemn you to the prison of this Holy Office for a period determinable at our pleasure, and by way of salutary penance, we order you during the next three years to recite, once a week, the seven penitential psalms, reserving to ourselves the power of moderating, commuting, or taking the whole or part of the said punishment or penance."

† See Burnett's *Early Greek Philosophy*, and Benn's *Greek Philosophers*.

the change? This was the problem which the Greek thinkers set themselves to solve. Creation and annihilation appears to have been very early dismissed. But if all things were changing, what was the constant, eternal thing which formed the substance of it all? To this question there were returned various answers. It was air, water, fire, space, number, etc., etc. The search was for some principle which would explain the world without the aid of the Gods. It was a direct attack upon supernaturalism; it challenged the very foundations of theology. To develop, the human mind had to be released from the trammels of theology, and as Lange points out, this work of liberation was accomplished by the Materialism of the ancient Greeks.

In passing, we may note a pregnant remark of Lange's in the opening lines of his classic *History of Materialism*. "Materialism," he says, "is as old as philosophy, but not older." That is an apt reminder to those who concern themselves less with fundamentals than with superficialities. One may put the same thing in another way, and say that if we take philosophy to stand for either organized and systematized knowledge, or for a rational principle of unity, then Materialism is an indispensable condition of genuinely scientific thinking. Scientific thought is ordered thought resting upon systematized knowledge and appealing to experience for verification. It must appeal to known facts, and to at least conceivable forces and conditions. There can be no completely rational philosophy of nature otherwise.

An important step forward was taken by Demo-

critus. He is said to have taken his leading ideas from an earlier teacher, but it is from him that Materialism, specifically so-called, dates. He stands forward as one of the leading thinkers of antiquity, and richly deserves a place amongst those of all time. Nothing exists, he said, but atoms and the movements of atoms. Nothing comes from nothing, and nothing is ever annihilated. All we see, in both the inorganic and the organic world, is due to the number and combination of atoms. He took the further important step of asking, not what do the senses tell us, but how do they tell us? Such things as sweetness and bitterness, colour, warmth, etc., exist only as an opinion, or as a modern would say, exist only as sensations. But there is nothing that comes by chance, only through a calculable necessity. He rightly saw that the work of science was to establish the law of the change.

Is should be pointed out that Democritus allowed for only one kind of atom. The science of chemistry was as yet unborn, and the many kinds of elements known to modern science had not yet been glimpsed. But that is quite a matter of detail, as is also, so far as the philosophy of Materialism is concerned, his hitting on the atom as the raw material out of which all things are made. The essence of his position was the assertion of a primitive substance out of which all things are formed, back to which all things go. There was nothing left to chance; there was nothing for the gods to do. He saw that the causes of things must be found in the existing forces of nature, and whatever criticism may be passed upon the form in which he

cast his philosophy, the fundamental matter was there. His speculation, with regard to the conditions under which things were formed, was the most fruitful ever made by a single individual in the history of science. Modern science has taught us much about the atom and matter, but it has not seriously disturbed his fundamental principles. And, once enunciated, these principles could never be completely ignored. They remained a power to be reckoned with, and time after time have shown themselves to be possessed of revivifying power.

Through Epicurus, who gave greater literary expression to the teachings of Democritus, and applied his principles to ethics, we reach Lucretius. In one of the most remarkable pieces of literature antiquity has bequeathed to us, Lucretius works out a complete cosmology and anthropology, which excludes the agency of the gods. His picture of human life—

> Sprawling in the mire in foul estate,
> A cowering thing without the strength to rise,
> Held down by fell religion's heavy weight—
> Religion scowling downward from the skies,
> With hideous head and vigilant eyes of hate.

—is a sufficient indication of the trend of his thought. He avows it as one of his main objects to relieve man of the load of terrors with which religion has burdened him, to enable him to stand erect and give the monster gaze for gaze; and he does this by arming man with a knowledge of himself and of the world in which he lives. His whole arguments are burdened with the refrain that nature does all things of herself and without the aid of the gods. There is no wonder

that priests have loaded his name and that of his master Epicurus with abuse.

But Lucretius reckoned without the Christian Church. With its accession to power the science of the ancient world underwent an eclipse. The more primitive superstitions of the Eastern world were revived under the name of Christianity. The monk took the place of the philosopher, the priest ruled where the scientific enquirer was beginning to grope his way. The Church encouraged no enquiry, and brooked no criticism. Materialism was under a cloud, and the barrenness of thought in its absence was never so clearly shown as during the seven or eight centuries during which the Christian Church lorded it over European thought.

What of the Greek scientific thought survived had to be sought mainly outside Christendom—in the more civilized and more cultured Mohammedan world. But as one of many examples that might be given of the extent of the retrogression under Christian influences, we may take the following passage from Hippocrates, written about 400 B.C. He is discussing the nature of epilepsy, a complaint which has been peculiarly associated with religion and religious "illumination," and he says:—

> As regards the disease called sacred, to me it appears to be no more than other diseases, but to have a *physis* (*i.e.*, a law) just like other diseases. Men regard its origin as divine from ignorance and wonder, since it is a peculiar condition and not readily understood. Surely then this disease has its *physis* and causes whence it originates, even as have other diseases, and it is curable by means comparable to their cure. It arises like them from things which enter and quit

the body, such as cold, the sun, the winds, things which are ever changing and are never at rest. Such things are divine or not—as you will, for the distinction matters not—nor is there need to make this distinction anywhere in nature, wherein all things are alike divine and all are alike human, for have not all a physis which can be found by those who seek it steadfastly?—(Cited by Professor Singer in *Religion, Science and Reality.*)

In contrast with this, one may fitly place the attitude of the New Testament Jesus dealing with the same kind of affliction, some 400 years later :—

And behold a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son . . . And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out and they could not. And Jesus said . . . bring thy son hither.

And as he was a coming the Devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

One might suitably call this either Hippocrates on Jesus, or Jesus on Hippocrates, just as one took the point of view of the scientific enquirer or that of the African medicine-man. At any rate one may profitably contrast the attitude of the Christian divinity with that of the Greek physician, and to remember that while one gave his sanction to the demonology that held Europe fast in its degrading toils for many centuries, the other paved the way for the healing art of the sanitarian, the surgeon, and the physician.

My reason for dealing with the early Materialists is to make clear the principles for which they stood, and to exhibit the governing thought in their minds. The principle they were striving to establish was

precisely that which in our own days is known as Determinism, or the Mechanistic principle. It is the principle of determinism applied to the universe as a whole. The fact that Democritus stated it in the form of the atomic theory, ought not to hide the deeper truth. It would have made no difference to the essential principle had he declined to give the raw material of phenomena a name, but had anticipated such later terms such as substance, or the thing-in-itself. But the use of the word "matter" does not in the least prevent the Materialist checking his conception of matter from time to time by such better knowledge as may have been acquired. And it is to the credit of Materialism that in selecting the atom as the basic fact, it offered the scientific world the most fruitful conception given to it for many centuries.

What Democritus said, in substance was, "Give me existence, and I will build a world"; and that is just what sound science has been saying ever since. It is no objection to this to say that we do not know what "matter" is in itself. Later I shall have to examine this word and see what meaning can properly be given it; at present I wish to emphasize the fact that the Materialism of Democritus was one of the phases in the long fight between Naturalism and Supernaturalism, and also that the essence of the Materialistic conception is that all the changes in this world of ours, physical, chemical, biological, and psychological, are strictly deterministic in character. The one thing that would be fatal to Materialism would be the necessity for assuming a controlling and direct-

ing intelligence at any part of the cosmic process. Against any such necessity we have the whole force of scientific thought. Science has been able to develop only so far as it has set on one side this primitive anthropomorphic conception and worked as though Materialism were an accepted fact. To put the matter in another way; the essential issue is whether it is possible, or is ever likely to be possible, to account for the whole range of natural phenomena in terms of the composition of forces. That is the principle for which Materialism has always stood. By that principle it stands or falls.

What is clear also, is that the Greeks had really laid the foundations for the development of a genuine scientific study, and had actually reached sound conclusions—many, it is true, no more than mere speculations—but still speculations along substantially the right lines. They knew that the earth was a sphere, had worked out something approaching its correct size, and had speculated as to its being the centre of a system. They had worked out the character of the stars, understood that some were enormous distances away, and had speculated on the possibility of an infinity of worlds. They taught the motion of the earth upon its axis, and the fixity of the Sun. There were speculations as to the evolution of species, some interesting guesses of the origin of certain rocks; they gave us geometry and the beginnings of a science of mathematics. Their speculations on many scientific subjects were both interesting and suggestive, and the power for good resident in them was shown in the way in which the Mohammedans, taking Greek teach-

ing as a starting point, were able to serve as an influence for a revival in Europe centuries later.

So far as Christendom was concerned, for nearly seven hundred years, the human mind was left to tread the weary round of theological word-spinning. Art withered and literature decayed. Freedom of enquiry was forbidden, freedom of thought was impossible. Nothing could be more dissimilar than the Rome of Cicero, or the Athens of Plato, than the same cities under Christian influence. The eager, questioning, criticizing, mental activity of the Greek was forgotten. Science became subservient to one of the most degrading superstitions that ever oppressed the human mind. Instead of the philosopher speculating upon all subjects, high or low, there was the priest delivering the law of the Church, and at his back the executioner and the torturer ready to make men and women pay the price of too free enquiry or too honest speech.

At the Renaissance it was left for Naturalism to do again what it had done centuries before in Greece; and this time it was strengthened by what had been done in Mohammedan Spain. Starting with none of the advantages which the Christian Church had, Mohammedan thinkers had built up a civilization to which justice has never yet been done by Christian writers. Their schools gave to Europe its first physicians, and its first scientists, since the establishment of the Christian Church. For several centuries there was hardly a thinker of note in any of the sciences who had not either studied in the Mohammedan schools or under some one who had studied

there. They had transformed alchemy into chemistry, they had created a science of medicine, a science of optics, and laid the foundations of a scientific astronomy. Their thinkers were perfectly familiar with the conception of natural phenomena as a consequence of the play of purely natural forces.

What it could do to fight the enemy, the Christian Church did. From Roger Bacon to Bruno there was hardly an innovator in any of the natural sciences who did not feel the heavy hand of the Church. Penance, imprisonment, or execution was the reward of anyone who tried to lift from the mind of man the weight of superstition with which the church had burdened it. Later, the Church was compelled to work in a more restricted manner. But opposition was still there. The cry of Atheism or Materialism was still enough to daunt the boldest. Some left their works unpublished, or their thoughts unwritten. Others wrote with obvious reservation and lack of frankness. Even at so late a date as that of Buffon, we find him compelled to recant certain of his scientific heresies. Until about 1820 the Roman Church never officially admitted that the earth revolved round the sun. As late as about eighty years ago the celebrated Robert Chambers was impelled to bind his publishers down to a £1,000 penalty not to disclose the fact that he was the author of the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. The instinct of the Christian Church has always been sound where its interests were concerned, and it knew quite well that between itself and Materialism there could be no lasting peace or reasonable compromise.

The Church had presented and forced upon the world a fairly compact cosmogony. A small, flat earth, set in the centre of the universe, with stars and planets created for no other purpose than to serve the needs of man; man as the very head of the animal creation, substantially different from it and with a different nature and destiny; the supernatural firmly established; miracles an everyday occurrence; disease, comets, and all sorts of pleasant and unpleasant happenings accepted as evidence of the workings of either divine or diabolic agency, with every species of animal specially brought into existence to play its allotted part. In such a medium the Church stood solidly based, with a mental environment suited to its teachings, because for centuries it had been engaged in carefully rooting out everything of an inimical character.

The shattering of this scheme, with the establishment of the mechanistic conception of nature and of man, represents one of the greatest revolutions in the history of mankind. Geographical discoveries enlarged men's minds as to the size of the earth and the number of its inhabitants. In astronomy, it is difficult for moderns to appreciate the revolutionary effect of the teaching of Copernicus. When he revived the Pythagorean conception and placed the sun as the centre of the solar system, he altered man's whole position in the universe. As Dean Inge has pointed out, it logically took the ground from under many of the Christian teachings and doctrines—a geographical heaven and hell, the ascension of Jesus, etc. The teaching of Copernicus was, of course, banned by the

Church, but it found many champions. Kepler discovered the law of planetary motion, but being without a mechanical explanation, fell back upon that fetish of Sir Oliver Lodge, "Directive intelligence." Later, Newton applied the terrestrial gravitation of Galileo to the whole universe of matter, and showed that the same deterministic principle held universally. Newton was, in turn, attacked for his materialistic explanation, and charged, as was Darwin and Lyell, with attempting to take away from God the control of the universe; and from the religious point of view the charge was fully justified. Every advance in the idea of Mechanism involved pushing the activity of God farther back.

It is, however, curious to find Newton, in attempting to rebut the charge of Atheism and Materialism, illustrating the truth enunciated by Spinoza only a few years earlier, that "God" as an explanation is nothing more than "an asylum for ignorance." Replying to a criticism by Bentley, and dealing with the motions of the planets, he says :—

> I answer that the motions which the planets have, could not spring from any material cause alone, but were impressed by an intelligent agent. To make this system . . . required a cause which understood and compared together the quantities of matter in the several bodies of the suns and planets and the gravitating powers resulting therefrom . . . To compare and adjust all these things together . . . argues that cause to be not blind and fortuitous, but well skilled in mechanism and geometry.

Unfortunately for Newton's well skilled geometer-god, it was not long before Laplace, by utilizing the known laws of moving bodies and the dissipation of

heat, was able to explain the structure of the solar system as an inevitable consequent of non-intelligent forces. And, as Laplace said, God was not necessary to that hypothesis. Later still, the reliability and value of the mechanistic principle was shown by Adams and Leverier, who were able to tell astronomers where to look in order to find a new planet—Neptune.

In the early part of the seventeenth century was published Harvey's epoch-making theory of the circulation of the blood, reducing that to a question of pure mechanics. The Royal Society, founded towards the end of the century, avowed its object to be the gaining of natural knowledge, as against that of supernatural knowledge. Physics and chemistry had by this time pretty well got rid of the idea of God altogether. The title of a work by Boyle—one of the founders of the Royal Society—was *The Sceptical Chemist*. Geology followed towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the foundations of what afterwards came to be known as Uniformitism. Investigators such as Hutton, Werner, Humboldt, Sedgwick and Murchisson carried on the same story, and with the works of Sir Charles Lyell, the truth that all geologic phenomena could be accounted for by the operation of known chemical, physical, and thermal forces was established once for all.

Chemistry followed the same path. When Dalton, in 1808, enunciated the atomic theory, he brought back the central idea of the old Greek school, enriched by later knowledge, but the main principle was rein-

forced, and it lay at the root of the tremendous advance made by chemistry during the past century. The principle of the conservation of energy was another thoroughly Materialistic idea.

Finally came the enunciation of the idea of evolution in biology, later to be extended to the whole of existence, organic and inorganic. In this the supernatural has, obviously, no function whatever. The whole of the phenomena of nature, from atom to planet, from the tiniest speck of living material up to man, exist as the consequence of the interplay of forces inseparable from the raw material of existence. If evolution be true, the gods are unnecessary. The conception of a universe, which is self-running up to a point, and then needs a God to intervene and innoculate it with life, is one too ridiculous for serious scientific discussion. Like Laplace, we can say, "God is not necessary to the hypothesis." In the world of modern science the supernatural has no function whatever.

One thing the history of science clearly discloses. This is, that whenever there has been a move towards a better understanding of natural processes, it has been based upon a tacit or an avowed acceptance of the mechanistic principle. How could it be otherwise? An explanation must be in terms of the known. To offer an explanation in terms of the unknown, is not an explanation at all. Explanation involves the establishment of an equation, in such a way that given *a, b* and *c, d* follows. And how can one establish an equation if one or more of the factors are not merely unknown, but inconceivable? To think of the un-

known as like the known, is permissible, necessary, and helpful. To think of the unknown as utterly unlike the known, is neither permissible, necessary, nor helpful. That is why, in the history of man, supernaturalism has never enlightened, but always obstructed. In the whole of its history it has never cast the slightest light upon any one of the problems with which the human mind has busied itself. It has not done this because it has lacked the very condition of providing an explanation. To introduce the word "God" is not to explain, but to confuse. "God" is not an explanation at all. It is a narcotic. It lulls enquiry with a phrase, as a dram-drinker lulls anxiety with a dose of his favourite liquid. But the old questions recur, the old problems present themselves, and no answer has yet been found to any of them save on the lines of a scientific Materialism.

I agree with Dean Inge that, " If there are phenomena, whether biological, psychological, or religious, which cannot be made to fit into the framework of Naturalism, Naturalism as a philosophy is overthrown," with only a slight clarification of the sentence. For one cannot but admire the careful confusion of the passage. A given phenomenon may not be fitted into a particular Naturalistic formula, but that also may be, not because the principle of Naturalism is wrong, but only because the formula needs re-stating, just as many a scientific "law," in the light of additional knowledge needs re-casting. Dean Inge's proposition should read : If any phenomenon *contradicts* Naturalism, then Naturalism fails. What Dean Inge asks us to agree with—to have

said it quite plainly would have so exposed the fallacy that even religious readers would have detected it—is that everything shall be explained by Naturalism before it can be accepted. And that is obviously absurd, since it assumes that our knowledge of nature is complete, which is, if possible, still more absurd. An hypothesis is never bound to explain everything before it can be accepted. The only fatal thing is if there can be found facts that contradict it. And it would puzzle Dean Inge or anyone else to produce a single fact that is clearly contrary to the Mechanistic hypothesis.

Finally, it need only be pointed out, that we are invited to throw overboard an hypothesis which has been the only one that has enabled man to build up a science, in favour of one on behalf of which not a single verifiable fact has ever been offered. Pressed for proof, the believer in supernaturalism does nothing but offer us the facts that are to be explained. Life, he says, is here, and we do not know how it came. Intelligence is here and we do not know its cause. But the facts are common property, and to reaffirm the existence of a problem is not to explain it. Even Dean Inge offers nothing in the way of facts. It is not his own knowledge but the ignorance of other people upon which he relies. And that is always a dangerous basis on which to build. For ignorance is shifting, while knowledge is permanent. What a man knows, he knows for ever. But ignorance is, with all, a diminishing quantity. One cannot live without learning, even though one may live without learning very much. But knowledge grows and ignorance diminishes, and

that is the fundamental reason why the belief in the supernatural everywhere undergoes a decline. The history of mankind follows a uniform plan. First the gods who do everything, then their dispossession from one department after another, until they are finally removed to an infinite distance, doing nothing in a world which they once completely controlled. They do nothing where they once did everything. "God" is never more than an hypothesis; and an hypothesis that explains nothing may safely be dispensed with.

CHAPTER IV.

What is Materialism?

WE are now in a position to attempt a more exact definition of Materialism. Its general meaning should have been clear from what has been said of the part it has played in the history of scientific thought, as well as by the criticisms of some attacks made upon it. Primarily it stands as the challenge of Naturalism to Supernaturalism. Against the operations of nature as being determined by so many independent volitional powers, it asserts the possibility of explaining everything as a consequent of the composition of forces. If natural phenomena can be so explained, or so far as they are so explained, the principle of Materialism is admitted. If we give up all hope of so explaining them, there is then an opening for Supernaturalism. But it would be an opening only. There would still be required positive proof of its correctness.

But of that no proof has at any time been offered. It is not without significance that Supernaturalism has always rested its case upon the assumed invincible ignorance of mankind. In any and every argument in favour of supernaturalism, or Spiritualism, in any of its forms, the whole weight of the argument is made

to rest upon the alleged inadequacy of the Naturalistic or Materialistic hypothesis. Experience never convinces the Supernaturalist that the argument from ignorance is an extremely dangerous one; that experience has a nasty habit of replacing ignorance by knowledge; he returns with an air of assurance to dwell upon the existing ignorance of science, with the unexpressed assumption that this ignorance is irremovable. And while championing a hypothesis on behalf of which no evidence can be offered, or on behalf of which evidence is not even thinkable, he demands the most rigorous demonstration before accepting the general outlines of an hypothesis which is, so far, supported by all the knowledge we possess.

Secondly, the principle of Materialism is synonymous with what has come to be known in the modern world as Determinism or Mechanism. And this rests upon the belief that the state of the world, or of any portion of it, at any given time, is the exact consequence of the distribution and conjunction of forces preceding that moment. No new force is called into existence; no new factor is operative to produce a given phenomenon, whether we are dealing with physics, chemistry, biology, or psychology. Every new phenomenon is the equivalent of a new arrangement of existing forces. If either of these statements are disproved then Materialism is disproved. But if that conception is shown to be unsound, then the possibility of a complete science of nature must be dismissed as an idle dream. It becomes pure illusion, for the whole body of scientific thinking and work-

ing rests upon that conception and upon none other. Science is Materialistic or nothing.

Thirdly, it must always be borne in mind that in spite of the name and the historical connexion, Materialism is not dependent upon a particular conception of "matter." It is the historical function of Materialism that must be considered, not the special form in which the principle of Materialism has from time to time been cast. The conception of "matter" as made up of an infinite number of hard and indivisible points, is still a most useful working conception, however inadequate it may be from other points of view. But at any rate, it stood as the best that science had to offer for many generations, and it is for science to finally decide which is the conception on behalf of which most is to be said. And if it were ultimately shown that "matter" is not what earlier generations thought it to be, but was really a knot in the ether, or some form of electrical phenomena, or that the material atom might be disintegrated into other atoms, this would not affect Materialism in the slightest. Science must settle how we are to think about matter. The Materialist may watch the controversy undisturbed. For, although it may sound paradoxical to those who do not understand Materialism, it is nevertheless the fact that Materialism is not dependent upon "matter" at all. If that much has not been made clear the preceding pages have failed of their object.

Later, I hope to show that a great deal of the discussion about "matter" is a heritage from the long reign of scholastic metaphysics. People have assumed

that apart from the world given in consciousness, there is some other world of which we may acquire knowledge, and which has been dignified by the name of "Reality," as against the known world, which became, by implication, transient and illusory. Under various names, the Ideal, the Noumenon, the Thing-in-itself, the Unknowable, etc., and set out in all the impressive panoply of capital letters, this has proven itself to be a veritable bugbear in the history of philosophy. It is a most extraordinary thing that the world we do know should be dismissed as illusory, while a world of which we know nothing whatever, of which we never can know anything, and of the nature of which we cannot form the slightest conception, is accepted as the one enduring "Reality." I do not wonder that theological philosophers have clung to it with such desperate affection. A world beyond knowledge, is a world beyond criticism, and a thing which is beyond knowledge and criticism is a truly ideal foundation upon which to build a theological system.

A genuine Materialism is committed to none of these metaphysical nightmares. We are concerned with the world we know, and with none other. Modern psychology has at least made this much quite clear. The sole concern of Materialism is the establishment of the principles enunciated above. And once the principle that natural events are the consequence of a composition of natural forces is seen and applied with a moderate degree of logical acumen, the confusion that has gathered round the subject disappears. We are freed from the confusions of the Metaphysical

Spiritualist and from those of the metaphysical Materialist. Both are left floundering in a bog of their own creation.

We have to beware of both orders of confusion; to be as suspicious of those who invoke "matter" and "force" in much the same way as the religionist invokes "God" as we are of those who tread the nowhere leading road, or use the meaningless jargon of "Mysticism" and bastard metaphysics. The medieval habit of regarding words as the equivalent of things must be avoided at all costs.

But it is not easy to put the right meaning of "matter" in such a way as shall be crystal-clear to the non-philosophical reader. Indeed, a full discussion of it would involve such questions as "How do we get our knowledge of things?" "How far are sense perceptions reliable?" The whole subject of epistomology would have to be thrashed out, and in the end the very complexity of the subject would prevent many getting a clear view of the matter. And the plain man has very little appetite for such discussions. In this age of cheap journalism, with many widely circulated journals serving him up prepared views of life in tabloid form, he is apt to regard philosophical discussions as of no practical value, even though it might easily be shown that in every one of his expressed opinions he is assuming a determination of the issues he declines to discuss.

I will try to be both simple and precise; and may commence with the plain and simple statement that "matter" is no more than an hypothesis—that is, a conception framed to express one aspect of human

experience. The plain man has no doubt that the world exists outside his consciousness of it exactly as he sees it. And he proves it, exactly as the great Dr. Johnson tried, in his ignorance, to disprove the thesis of Bishop Berkeley, by kicking the ground to show that it existed. Of course, Berkeley never denied that the ground existed, or that it gave one the sensation of solidity, or that you could not stamp on it. But the attitude of Dr. Johnson is the attitude of the man in the street. To him the world exists as he sees it. Matter is one thing, mind is another, and he will tell you he knows both quite well, when, in fact, he knows nothing worth knowing about either. And as is so often the case, self-satisfied ignorance can only be removed at the cost of an amount of patient study that few are inclined to give to the subject.

Now we can make at least a commencement with the statement that the world we know—our world—is a world of experience. By that I mean that all our knowledge of the world is derived from experience, immediately by the individual, remotely by the accumulated experiences of all the generations that have gone before us. Of a world that lies outside that experience we know nothing, and can conceive nothing. We cannot even think of such a world. It is true we can think of all sorts of curious things, such as never have happened, and never could reasonably happen. We can think of men half a mile in length, of animals with the bodies of men, the heads of lions, the feet of a bird. There is nothing too extravagant to form the subject of thought, but however extravagant these pictures may be, they are only recombinations

of actual experiences. We have only taken our experience to bits, so to speak, and put the pieces together in a haphazard manner.

This is, in fact, no more than a statement of the essential condition of thought. We may think of things that are unknown, but we must think of them in terms of the known. A traveller setting out for unknown lands, may reasonably expect to discover many new and curious forms of both animal and plant life, but whatever the colour, or shape, they will be no more than variations of the fauna and flora already known. In brief, to think, we must have the material for thinking; and we cannot think outside the range of human experience because, first, the mind has been built up by experience, and second, because it is experience alone that can give us the material of thought.

The next clear step is that the world of experience is the world as presented in consciousness. One of the earliest and plainest divisions of this world is into that of an outside and an inside, a me and a not me, an objective and a subjective existence. In the one category we place a number of experiences—heat and cold, pleasure and pain, the sensation of taste, etc. In a very special sense these belong to *me*. I do not mean by this that others have not the same kind of experiences, but they are not mine. They may have this kind of experience while I am without it, or vice versa. Their experiences are like mine, but they are not mine.

In the case of the other set of experiences I have no such sense of personal possession. The table at which

I write, the room in which I sit, the garden that can be seen from the window, the "whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth"; of none of these can I assert the same close sense of personal possession. They are not part of me. I do not question that so far as my sensations are concerned they will cease to exist when I cease to be. But I do not assert that the table or the room or the garden will cease to exist when I am no longer conscious of their existence, or that because I may die in May there cannot be an eclipse of the sun in June. I say that these things have an objective existence, because, among other things, other people feel about them exactly as I do. Bring a dozen people into the same relation with the room in which I sit, and they will feel about it much as I do. These things persist in a way that my feelings do not persist. One distinguishing quality of objective existence, therefore, is that of persistence.

A second quality is that of a capacity for offering resistance. If I press against the table it offers resistance to my sense of touch. Indeed, the action of every one of the sense organs—taste, hearing, smell, sight—may be reduced to this sense of resistance. Touch appears to be the mother sense, of which all others are modifications. Finally a third quality of objective existence is position in space. Where one thing is, another is not; there are definable boundaries to every object of which objective existence is predicated.

Associated with the sense of an objective existence there is, therefore, persistence, resistance, and a position in space. It is considerations such as these that

led Sir Oliver Lodge to define matter as the sum of resistance, Spencer to say that the ultimate fact in consciousness was the persistence of force, and John Stuart Mill, in discussing the subject from a more subjective point of view, to define matter as the permanent possibility of sensations.

But this division of experience into an inner and an outer does not lift us beyond consciousness. Our knowledge of the world must lie within the world of consciousness for the simple reason that we cannot get outside it. The world we know, the only world of which we are conscious, and of which we can form any idea whatever, is the world that reaches us through our sense organs. To discuss what a world outside consciousness is like is sheer waste of time, even though one could perform the miracle of making such a discussion intelligible. It is certain that if I had been born blind the table before me would never have been known to me as an object having a bright surface, but only as one possessing hardness and shape. If I had been born without a sense of touch, but possessing sight, the table would have appeared as a shining object only, but not as a hard one. And what is true of each of us individually, is true of all of us taken together. The world is to us the world of which we are aware; and our awareness is at every stage conditioned by the nature of our sense organs. Concerning this there can be no reasonable dispute.

What I am really trying to do here is to fix a reasonable meaning to such terms as "matter" and "externality." We all use these terms, it is difficult to

see how we can avoid using them, since they represent basal facts in our mental life. There must, therefore, be a reasonable sense in which the terms may be used, or sane thinking becomes impossible. And it appears to me that the best way of doing this is to reverse the usual procedure, and instead of asking how does the external world make itself known to us, to ask what is it we know about an external world, and what do we imply by the use of such an expression. In this way we take nothing for granted, but enquire at each step what is it we know, and what covers the words used.

So far we have seen that externality, matter, is primarily a fact of consciousness. We experience a particular sensation, and we take that particular feeling as an indication of externality, in order to mark it off from other sensations to which we do not give that characteristic. The procedure is really one of grouping. At any rate that is all that is properly implied when we speak of "matter," or "objective existence." If this method of determining the connotations of words had been universal, a great many of the difficulties with which the history of philosophy bristles would never have arisen. Instead of this being done words have been given arbitrary meanings, and they have then been argued from as though they were unquestionable truths.

Now, as a Materialist, I call this external existence "matter." But, as a Materialist, I am also quite willing to call it by any name that may be found more suitable, or even to refrain from giving it any name at all, but merely refer to it as *X*. And it will not affect

my Materialism in the slightest degree.* It is the mechanistic principle, the possibility of explaining the world as a consequence of the composition of forces with which, as a Materialist, I am concerned. The ultimate nature of existence has nothing whatever to do with it. What matter is, how we are to regard it, whether we are to conceive it in this or that form, are all questions for current science to determine. As I have said, it is a mere historical accident that Materialism should have been tied up with a particular conception of matter and the atom. But the shattering of our conception of the nature of the atom or of matter, is, to Materialism, of no consequence whatever.

Do I then deny the reality of matter, or of an external existence? Not at all, so long as either expression is used in a reasonable manner. In science "matter" is an hypothesis, used as other hypotheses are used to help to an understanding of the world around us. It performs the same function in one direction that the ether does in another, and science is ready to discard either or both, just so soon as a more satisfactory hypothesis can be framed. "Matter"

* It is astonishing to find a man such as the late Sir Leslie Stephen, although in this connexion he is one of a rather numerous party, taking Materialism to be solely concerned with physical matters. Thus, "Materialism, we may say, represents the point of view of the physical enquirer. A man is a Materialist for the time being so long as he has only to do with that which may be touched, handled, seen, or otherwise perceived through the senses." (*An Agnostic's Apology*, pp. 129-30.) This is, of course, the vulgar view of Materialism, but it is quite wrong. Sir Leslie here commits the common error of permitting his opponent to state the case for him, and then accepting it as stated. It should have occurred to Sir Leslie Stephen that unless Materialism is able to give a satisfactory account of pure feeling, it must admit its inability to rank as a satisfactory hypothesis.

is real in the only sense in which "reality" has a meaning. When, for example, I say that the table is objectively real, I do not mean that the table as I am conscious of it exists apart from my consciousness. I mean that it appears to other people in substantially the same form as it appears to me. If they take up the same position as I take up they will see the table as I see it. This is all that is implied when we speak of objective reality.

On the other hand, the perception of the table may excite in me very different feelings from those it arouses in another onlooker. I may find the colour unpleasant, the shape distasteful, and so forth. But these feelings may be peculiar to me, and for that reason I say they are subjectively real. Reality is predicated of both sets of feelings, but it is an objective or a subjective reality as it is peculiar to my organism, or common to the organism of myself and others. The whole confusion here has arisen in the crude assumption that reality must mean something outside consciousness, instead of being a name for one of the categories of consciousness. What exists outside consciousness we shall be able to determine only when a man is able to pick himself up by the waistband of his trousers and carry himself round the room.

With other aspects of this question I deal later. At the moment this would seem a suitable place at which a word might profitably be said as to the confusion which gathers round such a word as Agnosticism. Properly the word has a very restricted application. Popularly, it is applied very widely. It has a great vogue with a number of people who obviously shrink

from avowing Atheistic opinions, and who, to avoid the charge of Atheism seize on Agnosticism, and apply it to the God idea, in which connexion it has not the slightest relevance. In philosophy, granting the legitimacy of certain assumptions, Agnosticism has its place; in religion and in relation to the God-idea it has no place whatever.

Generally speaking, the philosophical question develops along the following lines. To begin with, there is the crude realism which assumes that the world outside consciousness exists exactly as we see it. It is hot or cold, dark or coloured, heavy or light. The image we form of it is an exact copy of what exists apart from our sense organs. The next stage is an enquiry of how we get our knowledge of the world. The obvious reply is, through the sense organs. But is the testimony of the senses reliable? Obviously the senses can only register the sensational effect of existence, they cannot tell us what it is like apart from sensation. So by analysis after analysis the conclusion is reached that while an external world may be inferred, it is no more like the cluster of sensations we have relating to it, than the sensation of heat resembles the blazing coal of which it is the consequent. Thus arises the problem of the nature of ultimate existence, and the conclusion that while an external world may be inferred as the cause of our mental life, what that something is we do not know and cannot know, so long as knowing is conditioned by the structure of the sense organs.

Now, provided we admit the correctness of the preceding steps, here is a region in which a profession of

Agnosticism is quite legitimate. That is, we assert the existence of something, but deny the possibility of any knowledge concerning its nature. There is something here of which we may be ignorant about. Ignorance concerning the nature of a thing must clearly rest upon the assumption that that thing exists.

The belief in God, in relation to which Agnosticism is commonly asserted, begins in an entirely different manner, and rests on a quite different foundation. Belief in a God is in no way concerned with the mere fact of something existing. Existence, as such, is a common datum with all. The belief in God is an assertion concerning the *nature* of an existence, the believer claiming to know sufficient of its nature to give it certain very definite characteristics. It has intelligence, will, etc. Of course, not even a theist contends that he knows all about God, but he does contend that he knows enough about him to justify some kind of delineation.

But in the course of human development, the belief in God weakens, while philosophy, with its criticisms of the nature and extent of our knowledge, occupies an ever-growing sphere. And it happened, partly by accident, partly by design, that the two questions became confused. The philosopher, often to escape attack from theology, has allowed his "existence" to become identified with God; the theologian, because it helped to protect his anthropomorphic conceptions from criticism. Both have talked at large about God being the ultimate existence, when in truth "God" never has meant that and never can mean that.

But the Agnostic does not profess to believe in the

existence of a God, while professing ignorance of what he is like. He says he is ignorant of the *existence* of a God. He knows nothing about him, and asserts that no one else knows anything about him. Of what then is it that he professes to be in ignorance? What is he agnostical about? If the nature, but not the existence of God, the proper name for him must be found in one of the many shades of theism. If he is without knowledge or belief in the existence of God, then the proper name for him is Atheist. It is simple nonsense to say I am Agnostical concerning something which I do not believe exists. And one really does not profess suspended judgment on the proposition that two and two make five. A genuine Freethinker does not say, I am willing to assume the existence of a God, but I am quite Agnostical about his nature. He says, I do not believe in the existence of a God, and therefore have nothing in that connexion about which to profess Agnosticism. A moderately careful consideration of the nature of the religious and of the philosophical question should serve to keep the two distinct.

CHAPTER V.

Science and Pseudo-Science.

BY this time it should be clear to the reader that very many of the difficulties connected with Materialism arise from the way in which the subject is stated. A question that is not properly put cannot be satisfactorily answered. Instead of first of all determining in what sense science uses the term "Matter," an arbitrary definition has been laid down. The anti-materialist has set about demolishing something that never ought to have been set up, and the Materialist has busied himself in defending positions he was not at all concerned with.

To illustrate what is meant one may take the function discharged by the conception of a universal ether. One still meets with those who write and speak as though something was actually known about the ether in the sense that we know and can verify the existence of Jupiter's moons. The truth here is that the ether was actually *invented* to make certain things that were known to occur understandable. How, for example, is light transmitted to us from the Sun? If there is nothing between us and the Sun but absolutely empty space, we lack a medium of transmission. We are then up against the difficulty of conceiving action at a distance, or of seeing how light

waves can cross absolutely empty space. But, it was said, if we assume that between us and the Sun, in fact, filling all space, there is a continuous jelly-like substance, waves of light may be transmitted through this, and we have a reasonable explanation of what occurs. It was in this way that the ether came into existence and established itself in science. It is not, as a matter of fact, the only hypothesis on the subject, and if any other worked better than that of the ether, this one would be discarded without the slightest hesitation.

The only reason we have for assuming the existence of the ether is its utility. It was invented in order to work, and it is accepted because it works. And that is precisely the function of "matter" in the world of pure science. It is a conception that helps us to explain things as nothing else does. So far as Materialism is concerned, it would make no difference if this particular conception was discarded and some other better working one established, so long as the mechanistic principle remained unaffected. The whole function of a scientific hypothesis is that of helping us to understand, to form some kind of a mental picture of what occurs. Hypotheses are conceptions that are adopted when they are seen to work. A certain number of observations are made and classified. Then, it is said, if we assume such and such to be the case, such and such events should follow. If the events fulfil expectations the hypothesis is accepted as correct. That is the part played by all scientific hypotheses. They must help us to explain what *has* occurred. They must enable us to predict what *will*

occur; and they must not contradict a single known fact. In science the exception does not establish a rule, it proves the rule to be untrustworthy.

But the religious mind loves a mystery. It feels that in a world where things were understood there would be no chance for the supernatural. The old lady who professed unbounded admiration for the sermons of her favourite preacher, but declared she would never be so presumptious as to pretend to understand him, is fairly typical of the religious frame of mind. Hence the universal practice of religious advocates to stress the immediate ignorance of science in certain directions, and the indestructible ignorance of mankind in others. Thus Prof. J. A. Thomson, in his little book, *Introduction to Science*, has a whole chapter dealing with religion and science, the entire burden of which is that religion begins where human ingenuity and knowledge is baffled—that is, it is a kind of narcotic to which a number of people fly for comfort as others resort to alcohol. Religious phenomena, he adds, "like tender plants drawn out from shadowy recesses, wither quickly in the glare of common day." Read common sense for common day, and we have the case in a nutshell. It is not the less amusingly significant that Professor Thomson is only kept from seeing the fatal admission contained in that sentence by using an image which serves to prevent his appreciating all its implications.

So when it is realized by the supernaturalist that the mechanistic conception is steadily establishing itself, one is not surprised to find an attempt at consolation in the assertion that, after all, there are still

left fields of apparently irremovable ignorance, in which all kinds of useless and unnecessary fancies may disport themselves. We are told that we do not know what matter is "in itself," or what electricity is in itself, or what this mysterious force of gravitation is in itself, the implication being that if Materialism can be driven back to ultimate ignorance, there is some chance for Supernaturalism. Spinoza's equation of the will of God with the asylum of ignorance once more receives justification.

It is idle asking what is meant by "matter in itself," because as nothing can be meant, no answer to such a question is possible. When we speak of matter, the matter we have in mind must be the matter we know as a grouping of certain sense experiences, to distinguish them from other groupings of our conscious life. We must mean just that and nothing more. If it is said there is something beyond this, there is no need for anyone to deny it, only it is not the matter to which reference is made, or with which science deals. And if it is not that, then it is not matter, but something else. So with the other things named. Science does not ask us to believe in something which we call gravitation or electricity, and then in a further unknown something which is the real gravitation and the real electricity. In a loose but convenient way we speak of a stone falling to the ground as a *consequence* of gravitation. But strictly speaking, the stone falling to the ground *is* gravitation. Gravitation is a general term to express the observed fact that the movements of matter may everywhere be definitely measured and described. We do know gravitation "in itself," be-

cause gravitation is nothing more than the movements of matter reduced to an exact descriptive formula. The proof of this is that if we abstract in thought these movements of matter, gravitation disappears. There is nothing left to know.

What is true of gravitation, is true of electricity, of life, of mind, of every generalization framed to describe natural phenomena. These are classified as physical, chemical, biological or psychological, as the characteristics of each enable them to be arranged in groups. The laws of chemistry are descriptive of one group; the laws of biology of another group, and so forth. So far as we are concerned the thing in itself is the thing covered by the term used—that is the phenomenon we know. If electricity, gravitation, etc., are not the things we know, what, in the name of all that is reasonable, are they? What is a gravitation that does not correspond with what we mean by gravitation? or electricity that does not agree with what we mean when we use the word? Any man is at liberty to call black white, but he is not at liberty to insist that when he does so he is naming the same objects that another person names who follows the normal procedure.

It is curious to have to thus labour the simple truth; if things are not the same they are different and if they are different they cannot be the same. Yet that is all we have just been trying to establish, and a careful reading of a large number of books on scientific or philosophic subjects, written by men of standing, will soon prove how necessary this is. I am quite aware that I shall have added to my offence in

making this much plain by doing it in simple words, instead of wrapping it up in involved and technical language that is far more likely to add to the mystery than to clear it up. But what has been said may serve to illustrate the wholesome truth that an ounce of understanding of the methods of science, and of the principles of scientific reasoning, is worth a ton of such facts as the number of the stars, the size of Jupiter's moons, and such-like collections with which ordinary people are deluded into the belief that they are receiving a scientific education. Moreover, a great many of these metaphysical difficulties are perpetuated because so few will trouble to ask themselves what the bother is about, and will not take the trouble to think the questions out for themselves. In saying this, I am not thinking wholly of the man in the street. A very slight independent study of the history of philosophy will show that once a well known writer has wrongly stated a problem, those who follow go on stating it in the same way, or dealing with the misstatement, without ever asking the important question whether the question asked is one that ought to be asked, or, if it is, whether it has been rightly put. It is not only the ordinary man whose thinking runs in grooves. It applies to leaders in science and philosophy. The difference shown is not that of running in or out of grooves, but that the grooves followed exist on different levels.

There is a curious but interested impression abroad that the Materialist is either bound to explain life and mind in terms of physics and chemistry, or else to ignore them altogether. Thus we find Professor

Arnold—one among many—saying in his *Scientific Fact and Metaphysical Reality* :—

> Materialism is the most uncritical of philosophies, but it is in one respect often like a true theory of existence as a whole; that is, it tends to be of an analytic character, though stopping short of a full analysis . . . Materialism takes as its basis one of three types of existence . . . and practically it omits the other two.

If this were true, Materialism would not be merely uncritical, it would be sheer fatuity. Writers who deal with the subject in this fashion might at least pause to ask themselves whether it is possible that Materialists are so stupid, and so blind as to ignore the existence of mental life and its need for an explanation.

Materialism no more ignores mental facts than it ignores physical ones. It has a place for both, attaches a meaning to both, and offers an explanation of both. That explanation may, of course, not be acceptable, but it is certainly there. And if it cannot offer a complete explanation of all we see, it only suffers under the disability with which all human knowledge is afflicted. All that is claimed here is that the explanation whenever found will be along mechanistic or materialistic lines.

In another direction we have a man such as Professor Needham, the eminent bio-chemist, remarking, as a fatal objection to Materialism, that "Mental processes cannot possibly receive explanations or descriptions in physico-chemical terms," a statement with which I, as a Materialist, cordially agree. There is also the triumphant declaration of Sir Oliver Lodge that, "to explain the psychical in terms of

physics and chemistry is simply impossible." Similar comments might be multiplied indefinitely, but all I am desirous of doing is to note the various kinds of objections that are brought against Materialism. It must be admitted that in this instance, both Professor Needham and Sir Oliver Lodge might point to Materialists who have endeavoured to perform the impossible. Thus one professed Materialist replies to Sir Oliver's statement, "Why not?" and even in the case of Mr. Hugh Eliot, we find in his *Modern Science and Materialism,* the statement that Materialism denies " any form of existence other than those envisaged by physics and chemistry," and the setting down of the proposition that " those events known as mental processes . . . are expressible purely in terms of matter and motion." With defences of Materialism such as these, one may well feel sympathy with the words of an Eastern potentate, "Allah save me from my friends; I can look after my enemies myself."

The proper reply to Sir Oliver Lodge and to his kind of criticism is the question, why? Why should physics and chemistry explain everything? If they could be so explained, what need is there for either a science of biology or psychology? Why should the Materialist be called upon to explain an emotion in terms of chemistry or physics? I do not envy anyone who tries to accomplish the task. It is one thing to show the physical conditions of a sunset; or that accompanying every mental state there is a corresponding movement of some portion of the nervous system. But when that is done the sensation remains

an ultimate fact, as a sensation. The physical equivalent of a sensation of redness is a vibration impinging on a sensitive surface, but one cannot explain redness as a mere physical action. The two things simply cannot be identified in thought.

It is not, therefore, those who in the name of Materialism, rush in to defend a position they never ought to attempt to defend, who are in the right, but their opponents. Sir Oliver Lodge is quite right in saying that Materialism, *as he states it,* breaks down, but the fault does not lie with Materialism, but with his statement of Materialism. Moreover, in so stating it, he has ignored a very important aspect of the methods and function of science. As a mere elementary scientific truth, it does not follow that if we state the factors of a compound, we must be able to describe the qualities of a compound in terms of the qualities of its constituents. We may say that the elements of a biological compound are physical and chemical; or that of a psychological fact, biological and chemical; but we are not in the least committing ourselves to the proposition that we can, therefore, explain psychology in terms of biology, or biology in terms of physics and chemistry. The mere fact that science is compelled to describe some things as physical, others as biological, and yet others as psychological, is enough to show that they belong to different categories, and so need a different set of terms to describe them. This should be clear to even laymen, still more so to leaders of science. Sir Oliver Lodge and others overlook the obvious fact that if things are different they cannot well be the same,

and if they are the same there is no need whatever to have a different set of words to describe them.

It is not difficult to kill a proposition that is carefully fashioned for slaughter. But, unfortunately, it is much easier, at all events it takes fewer words, to state a fallacy than it does to expose its nature. And the peculiar fallacy involved in the statements under notice, places the anti-materialist at some disadvantage. The anti-materialist can appeal to established prejudice in familiar language, and assent calls for no great mental effort. Disproof requires a rather careful consideration of scientific principles, and this only a few are willing to give. Still the task must be attempted if the Materialistic position is to be made quite clear.

Thoroughly to expose the particular fallacy under examination would mean a very lengthy disquisition on the meaning of "cause" and "law" as used in science. Both have led to endless discussions, and the length and number of these may be taken as evidence of the confusion prevailing. With the meaning of causation I deal in detail in a separate chapter, only touching the subject here sufficiently to make the position plain.

It is a sufficient reply to those who say that Materialism ought to be able to explain everything in terms of physics and chemistry to say that if this were so "laws" of biology and psychology would be quite unnecessary. The existence of these laws is enough to prove there is something wrong in the statement. Consider the facts. We are surrounded by all sorts of happenings, and one of the first steps

towards understanding them is to reduce them to some kind of an order. This is done, in the first place, by groupings. Phenomena showing a certain number of characteristics in common are brought together, and a formula, or "law" devised that will express the qualities they have in common.* To describe certain properties we frame laws of physics. But at a certain point we find that our description does not cover all that is before us, and we frame laws of biology; later, we have laws of psychology, etc., etc. But it should be quite clear that the only reason for framing laws of chemistry is that laws of physics will not describe all that occurs. Similarly, the impossibility of describing other phenomena in terms of physics or chemistry necessitates the devising of new laws. The existing ones are not superseded, every one of them may be found illustrated in the movements of the human body; it is simply that in the grouping of phenomena, according to certain general characteristics, new formulæ must be devised to correctly describe these characteristics.

But having said this, it does not follow that the later "laws" are independent of the earlier ones. It is a commonplace of scientific method that physical phenomena give the condition for the appearance of chemical phenomena; chemical and physical phen-

* General language uses such expressions as, "the world is governed by law," "nature moves according to law," etc., etc., as though a law of nature were some objective fact. As a matter of fact, laws of nature are not discovered by man so much as they are made, or devised, by him. A law of nature is a formula devised by man to express his experience of things. It is well to bear this consideration in mind, as so much of the case for supernaturalism rests upon a misunderstanding, or an overlooking of this fact.

onema the condition for biological phenomena; physical, chemical and biological, for the appearance of psychological phenomena. Every scientist is bound to assume in his work that the cause for the existence of the later and more restricted group of phenomena is to be found in the existence of a wider and earlier one. There is not a scientist in the world who, if looking for the cause of psychological facts, would not seek it in biological, chemical and physical ones. To think of the former in the absence of the latter is a sheer impossibility. It would leave the mind a blank. Thus the only reason why new laws are framed is that existing ones are found to be inadequate. Laws of psychology are created because laws of chemistry, physics and biology will not cover the existing facts. That is why I say that Professor Needham, Sir Oliver Lodge and others are hopelessly unscientific in saying that the Materialist must explain psychological facts in terms of chemistry and physics, as are those who foolishly accept the challenge and attempt to prove the scientifically impossible.

In passing, I may note, that if the above statement be accepted as correct, it must follow that the search for the cause of a given phenomenon resolves itself into the search for the conditions under which that phenomenon occurs. I will deal at length with that when I come to treat of the question of causation; for the moment I would ask the reader to bear this fact in mind, a fact the ignoring of which has led to no end of confusion, even with leading writers.

To return to the correct understanding of the function of "law" in science. If we arrange laws of science in a certain order, we find that the widest are what are known as laws of physics. The laws of chemistry are more restricted in their application. Still more restricted are those of biology, while the most restricted of all are those of psychology. If one group arises from the other this is precisely what we should expect to find. And the vital difference here between the Spiritualist and the Materialist is that while the latter stands the scientific edifice upon its base, the former insists on standing it upon its apex. He derives the earliest from the latest, the most simple from the most complex, instead of the other way about. The Materialist insists that we must look for the emergence of new phenomena from phenomena previously existing. To him, nature is a changing whole, and the unity of the whole remains no matter how great the internal changes.

And, however produced, a biological or a psychological fact, once there, remains a fact distinguishable from other facts. A brick striking a man on the head may, so far as the motion and the impact of the brick are concerned, be described in terms of pure physics. But it does not follow that, therefore, we can explain the vision of stars which the man experiences, following the impact, in terms of physics also. You may give the physical and chemical conditions of a sunset, but our feelings arising from the perception of sunset belong to an entirely different category, and to explain them we must refer to a different class of "laws" altogether. You can reduce a psycho-

logical fact to the chemical and biological conditions from which it springs, but in doing so you have destroyed its character as a psychological fact. And no one in their senses would look to find in analysis that which is produced only by a synthesizing of the factors.

Once again I am explaining only that if things are different they cannot be the same. Sir Oliver Lodge and others appear to claim that if things are different they ought to remain the same—at least, that is what he makes the Materialist say, and seems to think that this is a correct reading of the Materialistic position. But I can assure everybody interested that one who understands, not merely Materialism, but scientific method, is not quite so absurd as to attempt to explain difference in terms of identity. The Materialist does not say that you must be able to describe life and mind in terms of physics and chemistry. What he does say is that inasmuch as life and mind are never found apart from certain physical and chemical conditions, we must seek for the cause of their emergence in these conditions. It is quite true that our present knowledge of these conditions is not exact enough for us to say exactly how the passage from one form of existence to another takes place, but that is never more than a confession of ignorance. To say that life gives us something different from anything present in the most complex chemical phenomenon is quite beside the point, since if it did not we could not tell one from the other, and this is a common experience in causative changes. There is no taste of sweetness in carbon, oxygen, and

hydrogen, but from a combination of the three we get sugar. To look for life in chemical substances because we see life emerging from chemical conditions is scientifically absurd. Every fresh combination gives new qualities, new properties, and the Materialist is arguing from experience when he says that we must seek in the direction indicated for the origin and explanation of life. If we are not to seek here, where shall we look? To assume that life is an expression of some new force, without any organic relation to other forces, is a quite inconceivable proposition, and can only commend itself so long as one does not seriously think out all that is involved in its terms.

At the risk of being thought tedious, I must again emphasize the fact that a seach for the cause of anything is never more than a search for the conditions under which that thing occurs. When we have discovered this much, we have discovered all that is scientifically involved in an act of causation. We simply record the observed fact that whenever a certain assemblage of conditions occur, a particular result follows. It is not a question of *why* this should be so, but simply the perception that it is so. I do not know why the union of oxygen and hydrogen should be registered by the appearance of water, or why that of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon by sugar. But we do see one as a result of the other, and we take the fact of causation as established. In the case of life and mind, the conditions are far more complex, and so more difficult to determine, but exactly the same thing holds. When we have com-

plete knowledge of all the conditions attending the appearance of life and mind, we shall know all there is to know about them.

That this is not clearly seen is very often due to the manner in which the subject is approached. To ask, as does Sir Oliver Lodge, how consciousness becomes *associated* with matter, or in what way life *controls* matter, is inevitably to suggest that we are dealing with two things, independent in themselves, but brought into association for a longer or shorter period. It leaves no room for the counter consideration that we are probably dealing with a new collocation of forces, which of necessity results in the appearance of a new quality or set of qualities. The Materialistic hypothesis is ruled out in the way the equation is stated. Put in the same way, in every case science would have to return to the essences and principles of medieval scholasticism, when mere words took on all the qualities of things. If, for example, we were to act in an identical manner in a question which is admittedly one of physical science, and to ask in what way wetness becomes associated with oxygen and hydrogen, we might well see reason for believing in the existence of some principle of aquosity. We do not ask in what way light becomes associated with vibrations, we simply treat it as a phenomenon accompanying certain rates of vibration. The search for the origin of life is the search for those conditions under which the phenomena of life appear. This point cannot be too strongly emphasized. Disinclination to admit it, and the fear of incurring the charge of Materialism is responsible for much need-

less confusion. Not so long ago there was the same timidity on the part of many scientists to admit that living matter arose from non-living matter. To-day there is hardly a biologist of repute who would question that as a theoretic necessity. But there is the usual disinclination to take the final step, and to assume that in the same way as the living develops from the non-living, so mental phenomena have their roots in phenomena that are not mental.

Two very striking instances of this may be noted. The first is from an essay on *Religion and Science,* by Professor Julian Huxley, in his *Essays of a Biologist.* All developments in evolution, he tells us, can be traced back and shown to be specializations of one or more of the properties of living matter, but, although " there can be no reasonable doubt that living matter in due process of time originated from non-living matter" yet, in spite of the fact that we can trace mental phenomena back to a stage in which it is impossible to distinguish them from " physiological reactions," we must assume that all matter has associated with it "something of the same general description as mind in the higher animals." Why? Why should we suddenly stop short of the perfectly natural and logical conclusion that mind arises in the same gradual way as life, and rush to the unwarranted one that "mind" must, as mind, have existed independently of matter, although always in association with it? I can see no reason whatever for this except the disinclination to incur the odium of Materialism.

A second example is from a more recent work on

Holism and Evolution, by General Smuts. In the process of evolution, we are told :—

> The lower unit always becomes the basis of the higher unit, becomes as it were the stepping-stone to the next stage. Thus the earlier simple structure of the atom becomes the unit for the molecule; the molecule for the crystal; the complex of molecules for the cell; the complex of cells for the higher organism; while the still more complex groups of cells become the units for higher psychic or personal structures . . . But while this newness, this creative novelty arises everywhere, it is at two stages in particular that something utterly new and wholly different in kind and nature arises from the union of pre-existing elements; these are the stages where so-called life and mind appear.

So again, instead of carrying on the evolutionary process to its logical conclusion, and treating every new appearance in the same way, we have a quite arbitrary and wholly unnecessary distinction made in the case of life and mind. At all costs, life and mind must not be identified with natural processes as a whole.

Often it is said that the Materialist looks upon life as a property of matter. That is not quite the case. What the Materialist says is, that life is a function of organized bodies, which is not quite the same thing. Again, the Materialist is called upon to show in what way life and mind are connected with animal organization. But the connexion is already there; it is patent to all. It is a fact of universal experience that can be denied by none. It is for they who assert that life and mind are independent of organization to show in what way they can exist apart from matter. Seeing that *A* and *B* are never found apart, that

every change in the one is accompanied by a change in the other, it is surely the task of those who make the assertion to show how they can be separated. The Materialist rests upon an admitted fact, and relies upon a sound and proved method of investigation for further knowledge of the fact. Certainly something more than our inability to fully answer all the questions put by an impotent and disguised Supernaturalism would be necessary to warrant the relinquishing of a principle, and the discarding of a method that every advance in positive knowledge has illustrated and enforced.

CHAPTER VI.

The March of Materialism.

I AM reserving for a couple of concluding chapters a discussion of Causation and Personal Identity, two questions which, it is often said, are fatal to a consistent Materialism. They might have been dealt with earlier, and from the point of view of strict logic ought to have been, but there are times when the logical order is not always the better one, and this would seem to apply to the present discussion.

What I have been anxious to do is to keep the mind of the reader on certain general principles, so that the central issue between Materialism and its opponents might be clearly realized. For the same reason I have not been desirous of overloading these pages with detailed examples of scientific fact in support of Materialism, lest by so doing it became difficult to see the wood for the trees. Half the haziness abroad concerning what science actually teaches is due to the fact that we have fallen into the mistake of identifying the mere acquisition of knowledge for an understanding of science, instead of taking it at its proper value as a mere stepping-stone to the larger and more important thing. Knowledge of scientific facts is to-day plentiful, easy to get at, and may be

acquired by the most ordinary intelligence at the cost of a little industry. But an understanding of the philosophy of science still remains as rare as ever. That is why we have so many journeymen in the world of science and so few Darwins.

The essence of Materialism, we hold, is contained in the simple statement that all phenomena, no matter to what order they belong, are due to the composition of natural forces. It is not tied down to any conception of "matter" or of the atom, although both have played a great part in the history of the discussion. The Materialist simply takes his conception of the atom or of matter from contemporary science, and is at liberty to revise these conceptions as may be necessary in the light of fuller knowledge. He does not say that life is a property of matter, nor that life is to be explained in terms of physics or chemistry, but simply that life is a function of certain organized bodies, and that chemical and physical phenomena provide the conditions for its appearance. Further, he holds that to provide an explanation of the origin of life we must discover the conditions under which it appears. That is all science ever means by explanation. As Shadworth Hodgson says, "Dependence means a relation such as that, given a conditioning phenomenon the dependant phenomenon invariably occurs, and in the absence of the conditioning phenomenon the phenomenon called dependent invariably makes default." We do not, with Sir Oliver Lodge, talk about seeing only the effects of life, but not Life itself. That kind of language is hopelessly unscientific; it throws no light whatever on what is before

us, and is a survival of the primitive ghost theory which actually thought of life as something distinct from the organism itself. So long as we keep strictly to the facts we escape the pitfalls which beset us through following supernaturalistic will-o'-the-wisps in either their original form, or in the disguises they assume at the command of those who profess to be dealing with the world in a strictly scientific manner.

It is not seriously disputed to-day that it is upon a Mechanistic or Materialistic foundation that modern science rests. Properly conceived, no other basis is possible. To talk of there being mysteries in the universe with which the methods of science are unable to deal is sheer twaddle. You cannot study a mystery that defies comprehension—the most you can do is to adore it, which is the main reason why mystery has played so great a part in the history of religion. And even with the mysteries the ancient religionist was not quite so stupid as is the modern one. In antiquity the "mysteries" were mysteries to the uninitiated, but to these the initiate, the priest, held the key. It is only in modern times, with the discrediting of the priest, and the necessity of keeping a mystery at all costs, that exponents of religion have preached the existence of a mystery which no one could even comprehend.

But if we are to understand a thing we must think of it in relation to what has gone before, and to what is to come after. To understand a thing we must reduce it to intelligible and understandable conditions. If we think at all about it we must think in terms of

known forces and understandable conditions. It is a sheer impossibility to think in terms of what we do not know. Moreover, so far as we assume things to be explainable we must think in terms of causation. It is that or nothing! and we are thus reduced to thinking of natural phenomena in terms of Determinism, or taking the universe as made up of a number of forces having no fixed or understandable relation to each other.

But if Determinism be a universal fact, it is clearly not something that we can put on one side; if true it is the condition of all sane and orderly thinking. It is a law of thought, and a scientific law must be exemplified in the case of those who believe in it and of those who do not. Otherwise it is not a law at all. The laws of physics, of biology, of psychology, were as operative in the days of the cave-man as they are to-day. The difference lies wholly in our recognition of the nature of processes continuously in being. We discover truth, we do not create it. These are my main reasons for asserting that the Materialistic principle is one on which all science builds. The case of the man who discovered that he had been talking prose all his life without knowing it has a wide and varied application.

So far as the physical sciences are concerned, the Materialistic principle is admitted by all. But having once admitted this principle, why should we question its application right along the line? If we believe that man's body came by evolution, why should we assume that his intelligence came by any other road? What kind of a scientific thinker is it that believes in the

operation of natural forces up to a certain point, and at that point calls in a supernatural agency to innoculate the world with a new force? If we see that, up to the appearance of life, all changes are a consequence of the composition of forces, why should we look for a new agent because a new phenomenon has made its appearance? The advocate of a life force has no knowledge other than that possessed by the ordinary scientist. At best his case rests upon the alleged impossibility of our explaining how the new phenomenon appeared. But this may involve only temporary ignorance. And the ignorance of science is a very poor foundation on which to build a positive belief. As Dean Inge warns those who are inclined to build on the ignorance of science, "Those who take refuge in gaps find themselves in a tight place when the gaps begin to close." And gaps in our knowledge do close sooner or later.

The Vitalist, the disguised Supernaturalist, is fighting at the wrong end. To be logical he should have stuck to the primitive theory of the instantaneous creation of everything. When in pre-revolutionary France it was suggested that women ought not to be allowed to study science, some wit wrote a pamphlet with the title "Should Women be Permitted to Learn the Alphabet?" The meaning was quite clear. Those who wished to stop woman studying science should never have permitted her to learn to read. Once that was permitted, everything else followed. So if the Supernaturalist desires to make an intelligent and a logical fight against the Materialist conception, he should begin at the bottom. He should

deny the principle of Determinism altogether. But having admitted its application to physics and chemistry, or even to the simpler forms of life, it is preposterous to attempt to place limits upon its application, because it threatens the existence of some cherished superstition. In this warfare the anti-materialist is not a soldier in an army that is advancing to the conquest of new territory; he belongs to the rearguard of a retreating force that has fought its principal battles and experienced defeat.

The opposition to Materialism is motived entirely by the fact of its opposition to all forms of supernaturalism. And while on the one hand this is responsible for all the attempts to discredit Materialism, on the other hand, the power of religion is still sufficiently great to lead scientists to find some room for religious beliefs in a world in which they show religion has nothing whatever to do. A striking example of this is seen in a recently published work by Dr. P. McBride, on *The Riddle of Personality*. Dr. McBride's book is an avowed defence of Materialism. Nevertheless, he finds it incumbent to say that the Mechanistic theory, while giving no support to any religious doctrine or dogma, is not of necessity opposed to religion or a form of theism. And all that one can gather from that is that Mechanism is not opposed to the belief in a God so long as one says nothing about God, and does not credit him with doing anything in the only world we know and the only world with which we have to deal. The deplorable nature of this kind of concession will be appreciated by those who note the advantage taken

by defenders of the very doctrines which men like Dr. McBride deliberately repudiate. A little more courage at the outset would certainly save a deal of trouble at the end.

There is no question to-day of the general abandonment by clear thinking scientists of a God who continuously interferes with natural operations. What we have in his stead is a deity who exists somewhere behind nature, who is responsible for the existence of things, but now does nothing but see them work. In practice, this reduces God to a negligible quantity. If things are as they are, if natural forces act as they do act, because of their inherent properties, it is not a matter of vital concern whether these inherent properties were given by God or not. They are there; they affect all people alike, and they continue to act as they do, whether we believe in a God or not. The assumption that God once upon a time did something does not in the least affect the question of whether he does anything now. The first principle of Materialism —that the world we know is what it is as a consequence of the interaction of natural forces—is admitted.

Materialism has always claimed that the closest scrutiny of the world fails to reveal the slightest trace of supernatural influence. It has nothing to do with a God who exists somewhere at the back of everywhere—wherever that may be—and it leaves the proof of his existence to those who believe in him. No Republican has ever objected to a king who did not occupy a throne, and who played no part in national affairs. A God who does nothing is not

likely to trouble anyone. If the action of God is excluded from the world of natural phenomena he has, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist.

For the Theist, the position is not improved if, instead of a God apart from nature, a God is assumed who permeates all nature. That reduces God to a mere algebraic expression, but lacking the function of utility. Moreover, it lacks the essential characteristic of a God—personality and intelligence. Some people appear to be under the impression that God is to be saved by being beaten out thin, and that his dignity may be preserved by his having nothing to do. Moreover, if this were admitted, if it were granted that God is "immanent" in the universe, and permeates every part of it, this does not escape the Materialistic principle, it asserts it. I have already said that so far as Materialism is concerned, it is a matter of complete indifference by what name we call the stuff of the universe—whether we call it existence, matter, or Spirit, or merely *X*. So far as Materialism is concerned the essential thing is that we shall think of the universe as being in all its phases, the consequence of non-intelligent forces. Merely to call this assumed existence "God" makes no material difference. It does not benefit Supernaturalism and it does not injure Naturalism. To even argue that "matter" is not ultimate, but is the product of something else, the whole being the result of mechanical processes, is only turning Materialism out of the window and opening the door wide for its re-admission. What this form of the theistic argument does is to bring God within the category of a natural force operating in a

fixed, definite, and calculable manner. The theist manages to retain a God by throwing overboard all the essential qualities of one.

Shorn of all confusing apologies, the general issue is quite plain. On the one hand there is the primitive supernaturalism of which our modern vitalistic theories are the direct descendants. Under whatever form presented these are little more than primitive animism, with a new terminology and masquerading as science. Ringing the changes on the name ought not to hide that fact. Behind the "Directive Force" of Sir Oliver Lodge, or the "Life Force" of Mr. Bernard Shaw, there lies the vital principle of the medieval metaphysician, and at the back what is the ghost of the primitive savage. That side of the picture is quite distinct.

On the other hand, we have the unquestionable growth of the Mechanistic conception of nature in every branch of knowledge. It is a conception that admits of verification, so far as our knowledge extends, and is an indispensable condition of sane, scientific thinking. Until we conceive nature as following a determinable order, human thought is a chaos. But if the determinable order is there, supernaturalism is doomed. If it is not, then science is impossible. That is the simple issue and there is no logical halfway house. To say that this issue is not seen, would probably be not true. The hatred of Materialism shown by every advocate of Supernaturalism is evidence that the nature of the issue is seen. And from the other side, the fear of religious animosity, resulting in the discovery of some room for religion

within a Mechanistic universe, shows itself in the repudiation of Materialism by scientists, whose whole outlook on nature is fully Mechanistic. The ghosts of exploded theories linger, and inherited modes of thinking are hard to combat, but their influence becomes steadily weaker. Time and experience tends to fully justify the Lucretian claim that nature does all things of itself and without the aid of the Gods.

CHAPTER VII.

On Cause and Effect.

TO the critical reader it will have been obvious that the correctness of much of the preceding argument must depend upon a right conception of causation. We have been considering a constantly changing universe, and have taken it for granted that all change is a question of causation. Yet the nature of causation has never been explicitly argued, although it is quite clear that the relevancy of the arguments used will, to a considerable degree, turn upon what we are to understand by it. Science, we have said, is a search for causes, and causes are found, from a scientific point of view, when we have determined the conditions from which a given phenomenon emerges. When we are able to give a complete descripton of these conditions, we have not merely stated all it is possible for us to know, but we have acquired the only knowledge that is of the slightest use to us.

Again, we have to guard against the prepossessions involved in the language used. When, for example, the Spiritualist says, as an argument against Materialism, that we cannot see in what way nervous action *produces* thought, there is suggested the picture of two distinct things, thought and nervous action, as

though the one were as distinct from the other as a plucked apple is from the parent tree. Of course, anyone with only a small knowledge of science and of scientific methods would at once disown any such conception, and to an educated mind the notion is sufficiently grotesque. But an examination of many of the anti-materialistic arguments current is enough to show that much thinking is unconsciously coloured by this conception.

In this respect we are all of us more or less at the mercy of the language we are forced to use. Our words are, to use an expression of Oliver Wendell Holmes, polarized. They come to us with associations and connotations that belong to the past, and they carry the influence of past, and too often discredited thinking, into the present.

But with the greatest care, and with the best of thinkers, there exists considerable confusion on this question of causation. To take an example from John Stuart Mill. In the second book of his *System of Logic* (sixth chapter), Mill discusses what is called the Composition of Causes, and makes the assertion —an assertion which we believe to be quite wrong— that "the joint effect of causes is the sum of their separate effects." And he gives as an example of this the weight of a chemical compound, which is equal to the sum of its constituents. But this is not an example of causation at all; and had Mill kept before his mind the simple fact that a cause must always be a compound of at least two factors, he would never have used such an illustration. In relation to weight we have, in the example given, not two

factors, but only one. Weight is an expression of gravitation, and gravitation does not act upon the mass, as mass, but upon the particles composing it. The law of gravitation is that every particle attracts every other particle in direct proportion to the mass and as the inverse square of the distance. Thus the size, or mass, or the whole weight of a body adds nothing whatever to the phenomenon of gravitation. There is no composition of causes here, there is a mere sum in addition. In sober truth gravitation is not a cause of stones falling to the ground, gravitation *is* the falling.

It will be well, before concluding this chapter, to deal with some of the uses to which the argument from causation is put by some, in order to bolster up certain forms of supernaturalism. But before doing so, it is necessary to try to give to the terms "cause" and "effect" as precise and as scientific a meaning as is possible.

The earliest conception of causation is that of compulsion. A cause is one thing, an effect is another, there is a succession of events, and one follows the other because of a species of compulsion. The metaphysician expressed this compulsion as the action of some occult "Principle," the theologian as due to the action of the will of God. Both were pure verbalisms, since they threw no light whatever on the essential question. This species of explanation is far from dead, even to-day, but it was at least very severely shaken by David Hume, although the subject was acutely discussed by Malebranche, Locke, and Hobbes, while the Humian position, or something very near it was

actually stated as far back as the time of Empedocles. In the case of Locke, the argument from causation had been used to lead up to a belief in deity. But Hume seizing upon Locke's statement that the mind commenced as a blank sheet of paper on which experience inscribed characters, set himself to work to discover just what it was that experience taught us. It is true, he said, that experience tells us that events follow one another, but it does not and cannot show us any necessary connexion between them. We do not, in any case, observe power passing from one to the other. But because we see one thing followed by another, and in the same order, we assume that there is some power in the one by which it infallibly produces the other. The connexion between the two is the contribution made by the mind to what it experiences.

So far as Hume was concerned causation meant simple succession, or as more recent writers have expressed it, the observed sequence of phenomena. And it is easy to see why this motion commended itself to him. He had before him the primitive notion, dressed up in the imposing language of theology and metaphysics, of a cause producing an effect in virtue of some coercive power. All sorts of wild theories were based upon this idea, and against these, his essay was brilliantly successful. Taking his stand on Locke, and utilizing Berkeley's clever analysis, which dismissed "matter" as "a figment of the imagination and a refuge for Atheism," he insisted that all we had to go upon was the constancy of certain associations. We think of things as compulsorily related, because

we have always found them related. But all we are warranted in asserting is the bare fact of relation. Further than that we are not warranted in going.

At first sight nothing seems more convincing. But further consideration will, I think, show that Hume only got rid of one fallacy to substitute another—indeed, that he missed altogether the essential fact in causation.

There was no question among the disputing parties as to the fact of succession. That was admitted by all. Hume's opponents held that the succession was due to either some indwelling power or to the direct action of deity. Hume emphasized the succession, but denied the indwelling or the coercive agent. In denying this occult agency he was on the strongest possible ground. What he did not see was a truth emphasized strongly by Sir William Hamilton; seen, but not fully appreciated by John Stuart Mill; fully appreciated and strongly emphasized by George Henry Lewes; and since his time by other writers. This is that all the gratuitous mystery of a force passing from cause to effect, all the search for a "causal nexus," resulted from taking cause and effect as two distinct things, whereas they were only two aspects of the same thing. The true line of rectification lay in dealing with the difference between cause and effect as the difference between a fact and its factors. The matter was not simplified by Hume's great successor, Kant, in describing causality as a form of thought, since he was replacing an objective necessity by a subjective one. A necessity of thought is, after all, only one side of a necessity of things,

and there was, consequently, just a change of language without any real enlightenment.

We may get on the track of the real answer by taking the illustration used by Hume. If we observe the collision of two billiard balls, we notice that the impact of one is followed by the motion of the other. That is all we see, and it is the sole reason which we have for saying that the impact of the first was the cause of the motion of the second. And that, he says, is all we actually see in any case of causation. The only reason we have for saying that *A* is the cause of *B*, is that *A* precedes *B*. Now, if this is a *complete* description of what occurs, then the matter is ended. But I think it can be shown otherwise.

Far from being complete, this description leaves out of sight considerations of fundamental importance. To commence with, the first ball *A* is not, in virtue of its motion, a cause at all. If it did not travel as far as *B*, or if it failed to strike *B*, then it could not be a cause in relation to *B*. The two balls are in causal relation at the moment of collision only. And omitting the loss of momentum through friction, the momentum acquired by *B*, represents the loss of momentum by *A*. Therefore, if the acquired motion of *B* stands in the relation of an effect, of which the motion of *A* is the cause, the inertia of *B* stands as the cause of which the arrested motion of *A* is the effect. Taking then the product of the collision—the acquired momentum of one ball and the arrested motion of the other—cause and effect become here interchangeable terms.

The problem to be solved is the effect, or the pro-

duct, of a moving ball striking a stationary one. And the important thing to bear in mind is that the two balls are in a causal relation to each other at the moment of collision only. Prior to that they are entirely unrelated. Further, the *effect* of the collision must cover the whole of the product of the impact—whereas Hume notes but a part. One of the balls is, indeed, in motion before the other, but it is not this motion that makes it a cause of the motion of the other ball, but the fact of impact. That is, the cause is not constituted by antecedence, but by a conjunction of conditions, and the effect is the power of the co-operating conditions. It is not a succession of conditions we are concerned with, but with their assemblage, and both cause and effect are coincident with their assemblage. Hume's mistake was evidently due to his fixing his attention in the wrong direction. Impressed with the fallacy of some occult power passing from the cause to the effect, he overlooked the most salient feature of the problem.

Philosophers have looked for succession where they should have studied co-operation. When we describe a cause for a given effect, we are never doing more than describing the conditions from which the effect emerges. In describing an effect we are describing the co-operation of a given group of forces and conditions. Cause and effect are, therefore, not two distinct things at all. They are two phases of the same thing. When we analyse an effect into its factors, we are describing its cause. When we synthesize the factors into their product we are describing the effect. Sulphur, charcoal, and nitre are not the cause of

gunpowder considered separately, they only become such when they are brought into combination. Whether they are a cause of gunpowder or not depends entirely upon that fact. In every case of causation it is the fact of the assemblage of the appropriate factors that is the important and essential thing. The effect does not follow the combination, it is coincident with it. The effect is the registration of the combination. The whole of the confusion lies in our separating in thought, things that are inseparable in fact, and then treating them as quite independent existences.

Had this consideration been always borne in mind, the confusion existing over the question of causation would never have existed. As it is, we find one thinker after another apparently unable to rid his mind of the idea of cause and effect as being two independent things, one of which succeeds the other. Mill occasionally caught glimpses of the truth, as when he defined a cause as "the assemblage of phenomena, which occurring, some other phenomenon invariably commences." But this is followed immediately by the nullifying statement, "whether the effect coincides in point of time with, or immediately follows, the hindmost of its conditions, is immaterial." If what has been said above be correct, the effect is always coincident with the cause. Writers have spent their time looking for a relation apart from the things related; searching for a link between cause and effect, as though it were a question of a coupling between two railway carriages. And those who have denied the existence

of any such link, have generally only made the confusion worse.

It is probable that had causes been thought of as forces the case would have been clearer. It might have been then realized that while the identity of cause and effect is fundamentally an illustration of the indestructibility of force, the changes in phenomena, due to a combination of factors, is an illustration of the equivalence and convertibility of forces. But in thinking of cause and effect as two separate things, room was given for speculation as to what united the two. The metaphysician found room for his occult "principle," the theologian for the action of deity. Also, there ensued the discussion as to whether we could ever know causes in themselves—which again left room for the existence of an unknowable factor in causation.

What I have tried to make plain is that we know causes in the only sense in which we know anything. When we know that an effect results from the combination of certain factors we know causes in the only way in which knowledge is possible. If this is not scientific knowledge then scientific knowledge does not exist. We know that a particular grouping of agents issue in a particular consequent. The function of this group, as a cause, is the effect we see. Whether we know all about the powers of the factors, or all the qualities of the combination, is quite another question. On this road there is room for endless development. But development is neither certain nor secure while we obscure the issue with metaphysical verbiage or theological fallacies.

The bearing of this question of causation on much that has been said in the preceding pages will be obvious to all. It answers the objections put to thinking of life and mind as emerging from causes utterly unlike either. It is quite in line with the Materialist conception of the phenomena of nature as being all along an integration of existing forces which manifest new forms by the very act of integration. It explains the creation of new "laws" of nature in order to describe fresh phenomenal groups; and above all, it banishes those metaphysical ghosts which have for so long dogged the footsteps of the scientific worker.

It may not be quite out of place to touch here upon one or two points which arise in the discussion between the Theist and the Materialist on the question of deity, and which turn upon the use made of the concept of causation. There is, for instance, the common statement that one is led to a belief in God from a perception of the fact that every effect must have an adequate cause. But there is no question of adequacy, and it is really not adequacy the Theist is trying to establish. When he argues that life cannot be a product of non-living material because no trace of life can be discerned in it, he is not arguing for adequacy, but for likeness. When he says that an effect cannot be *greater* than its cause, what he really implies is that it cannot be *different* from its cause, which is absurd, since, as we have seen, there must always be unlikeness between cause and effect. The question of "greatness" is quite illegitimate. What nature pre-

sents us with is not greatness and littleness, but difference. It is we ourselves who make things either great or little.

The reply to this line of argument has already been given in the demonstration that the factors from which, when combined, an effect emerges, always do give something which is not manifested in the factors themselves. If we are to conclude otherwise, and to subscribe to this form of argument for Theism, then we shall be forced to conclude that in not a single case is a cause adequate to its effect, and we should thus destroy the argument in the very act of establishing it.

Sir Oliver Lodge, in his little book, *Life and Mind*, properly corrects this common blunder by pointing out that "properties can be possessed by an aggregate or by an assemblage of particles, which in the particles themselves did not in the slightest degree exist." But in his desire to find a basis for his own theism, he perpetrates substantially the same error. We are on safe ground, he says, in asserting that "whatever is in a part must be in the whole." This is probably true if all that is meant by it is that as the whole contains the part, the part is in the whole.* But in that sense, the statement was hardly

* I say probably true, because it is open to question how far we are justified in saying that the properties of a part remain the same in combination as they were prior to combination. How far, for example, is it correct to say that the properties of oxygen and hydrogen remain unchanged when water is formed? Certainly, we cannot trace all their properties while the combination exists. It is quite true that we can resolve water into its constituents; but that does not meet the point. One might retort by asking: What is oxygen which does not manifest the properties of oxygen?

worth making. At any rate, it does not follow that because there exists with man certain phenomena to which we give the general name of mind, that mind must be present in every part of the organism. One might as well say that because the quality of wetness is present in water it must be present in its constituents.

Another, and very famous, argument is that of working back to that Theistic nightmare a "First Cause." But a first cause is downright nonsense. A cause, as I have pointed out, must consist of at least two factors. A single one could lead nowhere, and give rise to nothing. And in every attempt to establish causes, we are engaged in the task of disentangling factors. Causation is an infinite series—a series, that is, to which no limits can be placed—for the reason that the resolution of every effect into the conditions of its existence leaves us with exactly the same problem before us. We are still engaged with the question of how that form came into being. We explain *A* by *B*, we explain *B* by *C*, and so on for as far as we can go. "First" has no other meaning save first in relation to a given group of phonomena. "First" in the sense of something that calls for no further explanation is simply non-understandable. It is true that we have to stop somewhere, but it is foolish to give to mental exhaustion the quality of a positive discovery, or to consciously make the evidence of mental limitations the equivalent of a demonstration of the existence of a God.

Still further. "Cause" is a term which can only be applied to phenomena, to the things we know. God,

on the hypothesis, ranks as the cause of phenomena, something that lies beyond it, and to which the laws of phenomena do not apply. When we leave this world, the laws we have devised to describe what occurs therein have no possible application to another and a radically different world. "God" cannot, therefore stand in the relation of "cause" to this world since that would make him part of the world of phenomena. So that even if the Theist, by travelling back along the line of phenomena could, in some inconceivable way reach God, he would be left with no method of getting back again. If he relates God to phenomena, he has merely established another link in an unending causal chain. And if he does not so relate God, then God ceases to be a cause of phenomena, and the theistic case remains in the air.

Causation, in short, does not and cannot carry us back beyond phenomena. The notion that because all phenomena has a cause, therefore there must be a cause for all phenomena—meaning by this a non-phenomenal cause for the sum total of phenomena—is wholly absurd. It is not science, it is not philosophy, it is not common sense. It is nonsense with its nature disguised in pompous language. You cannot rise from phenomena to the theistic god, because, as I have said, cause and effect are terms describing the relation of one phenomenon to another, and the moment we get outside the circle of phenomena our language and our laws lack relevancy. It is like discussing a bird's flight in the absence of an atmosphere. The theist commences with a wrong conception of causation. He proceeds by applying it to a region

in which it has clearly no place, and having confused the issue with clouds of words, ends with a conclusion that, on his own showing, has no relation to the premises laid down.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Problem of Personality.

PRIMITIVE conceptions disappear but slowly. Long after they have been specifically disowned, they occupy the mind in a more or less disguised form, and continue to influence thought. We have seen many illustrations of this in the preceding pages, and the persistence of outworn thought forms is peculiarly in evidence when we come to deal with such conceptions as that of "self" or "personality."

This is not the place in which to enter into an elaborate discussion as to the natural history of the idea of a soul. It is enough to say that this has been done very effectually by modern anthropologists, who have traced its history from the mistaken inferences of the primitive savage up to the more elaborate, but more tenuous theories of the civilized races. In its crude form, that of the soul, or double, as a literal copy of the body is held to-day chiefly by the advocates of Spiritualism. The more orthodox religionists are content to dwell in a cloudland of phrases, whose nebulosity, to some extent, protects believers in it from criticism. But there is small room for doubt that in the imaginings of the savage, who from the phenomena of dreams, and the like, derives

the idea of something inhabiting the body, which is a miniature copy of the body he sees, we get the beginnings of the conception of a "self" which controls the body, and which, while it may be affected by bodily changes, and can only express itself through the physical organs, is yet independent of them.

The development of human thought is gradual, the new fitting itself, with greater or lesser comfort, into the moulds of the old; and man does not cease to theologize because he commences to philosophize. He takes the existing language, and the old forms of thought, and tries to combine them with what new truths he has discovered. Primitive thought is very concrete, and the double is never thought of as radically different from the body. It is finer, more elusive, but quite as solid in its way as is the body. But as a knowledge of the organism and its functions becomes more definite, the ghostly becomes the immaterial, and the philosopher is called in to harmonize the crude theology of the savage with the actual results of more informed thinking. Indeed, it takes very little reflection to realize that, from the days of the Greeks onward, the alleged reasons that philosophers have given for believing in the existence of a mysterious something inhabiting the body, but yet independent of it, owe their existence to the desire to retain the old conception, rather than to knowledge having demonstrated its probable truth.

For it is never knowledge that is stressed as a basis for this belief, but only its absence. The Materialist is challenged, not on the ground that his opponent has greater knowledge than he, but on the ground

that the Materialistic conception is unable to explain in detail *everything* that is before us. The man who is unable to advance a single piece of verifiable evidence on behalf of the theory he holds, demands the most rigid demonstration of the truth of an opposite conception before he will accept it. He is not content with the fact that the Materialistic hypothesis covers the fact, at least so far as it goes; nor with the reflection that hitherto it is the only method that has enabled us to understand anything. What he demands is that the proof shall be absolute, the circle of knowledge complete. Before he will cease to advocate the toned-down beliefs of the primitive savage he demands that man shall know all there is to know.

At any rate I desire to emphasize the fact that however refined or modified the idea of an independent "self" may become, we are dealing with a watered-down conception that we owe to the psychological blunder of the primitive savage.

Let us commence with the fact that to all of us man is primarily a body. That he is something else in addition, may or may not be true, but he is certainly that. Further, we know life, not as a thing in itself, but as the expression of a relation. When we speak of a thing as alive, we imply no more than that in relation to certain other things it behaves in a particular manner. If I want to find out whether an object before me is living or dead, I apply certain tests, and as it does or does not respond to these tests I say it is one or the other. That is all that I or anyone else can mean with certainty when we speak of a

dead thing or a living thing. These relations may be very simple as with the lower organisms, or they may be varied and complex, as with the higher animals. But the primary distinction between a living and a dead body may certainly be expressed in this way. I may assume that these relations are controlled by a mysterious entity inside the organism, I may go on to enquire how this entity got there, and where it will go when the organism is "dead." But the existence of such an entity is a pure assumption. And it explains nothing. The real, the essential thing before us is how are the relations which we all take as indicative of life maintained.

I have said earlier that I do not agree with those who say that we do not know what life is; we do, although we do not know all about it. We mean by life the maintenance of certain correspondences between an organism and its environment. If I am asked how these correspondences have arisen, or in what way, given some primitive form of existence, certain highly complex forms of existence have arisen, I may be compelled to answer, " I do not know," although we are at liberty to speculate on the basis of what we do know. But so far as our knowledge does go, we are certainly warranted in assuming that "life" arose in substantially the same way that chemical and other phenomena have made their appearance. The researches and experiments of investigators such as Jacques Loeb have made it quite plain that many of the apparently psychic manifestations of lower organism may be explained as reactions to light or heat or chemical forces. It has also been shown that fecunda-

tion is a purely chemical process; and scientists already talk of as almost within their reach, the determination of sex.

Yet again, modern science has shown us that the animal body is composed of a multitude of cells, each carrying its own unit of force, and that it is the combination of these that gives us here the body of John Smith, and there the body of a tadpole. And whatever else death may mean it means certainly the break-up of this co-operative colony. And how is John Smith's life, which we are compelled to regard as the sum of the activities of this associated cell-life, how is this to continue when the condition of its association is no longer there? What we are asked to believe in is the continued existence of a corporation, after the corporation has been dispersed. Reduced to plain language the proposition is pure nonsense.

So much for what I may call the physical aspect of the matter. But when we are dealing with the sense of self, or the feeling of personal identity, we are concerned, largely, with psychology, and must approach it in another way.

There is, of course, no question of the reality of this sense of self. It does not follow that because I do not accept the Spiritualistic conception of self, that, therefore, I deny the sense of self, or that we may not give to it a quite definite, and, I hope, a scientific meaning. Whatever theory we have of the nature of John Smith, John Smith is a fact; and it is not the existence of the fact that is questioned, but its nature. Consequently all the talk of "I am I," or the impossibility of denying the sense of personality, is just

verbiage. No one wishes, or attempts to deny that personality is a real thing. One might as reasonably be accused of denying the reality of epilepsy because one does not agree with the New Testament Jesus that it is caused by demons invading the body. What is questioned is whether in addition to the human body and its functions there exists an independent entity which animates it for a time, and then departs. And when we try to reduce that proposition to mental imagery we find we have essayed a hopeless task.

Let us try to form a clear idea of what it is we wish to find out. "A man," says Professor Bradley in his fine work *Appearance and Reality*, "commonly thinks that he knows what he means by self. He may be in doubt about other things, but here he seems to be at home." That is really one of the difficulties of the situation. "I know that I am myself," is a common expression. "I am the self which persists through all change, and cannot therefore be the outcome of or dependent on these changes," is another. And from such like statements, enforced by the primitive ghost theory, there is built up the belief that the self is something which uses the bodily organism during life and seeks other fields of adventure after death. Or it is argued that a sense of self cannot be built up from states of consciousness because they are fleeting things. They come and go, and there does not seem to be any necessary connexion between them. To create a "self," a person, these states of consciousness must at least be fused into an organic whole, and for this work a transcendental entity is assumed which merges these impermanent states into one. This

fusion, it is admitted, may give us a continuous mental life, but it does not create a sense of self. The real self—the soul—is nourished by the experiences through which it passes, but it is not dependent upon them for its existence. That is the Spiritualistic theory in as few and as simple words as I can give it.

The opposing theory is that "self," while a reality as representing the sum of the activities of the organism, is myth, if by it is intended something which merely takes possession of the organism, or is in its essence independent of its activities. Hume, with that delightful clarity of vision and preciseness of phrase of which so many philosophers are destitute—and which, if they possessed, might quickly prevent them being recognized as philosophers, put this clearly. He says:—

> There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our Self; that we feel its existence and its continuity in existence; and are certain beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity . . . It must be some one impression that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any idea of these impressions or from any other, that the idea of self is derived—For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other: of heat or cold, or light or shade, love

or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself without perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is further needed to make me a nonentity. If anyone, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him . . . But I venture to affirm of the rest of mankind that they are nothing but a bundle of perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and which are in a perpetual flux and movement.

This is very clearly put, and later writers have added nothing to the essence of the statement. There have been additions, and certain reservations, the phraseology may have changed a little, and there have been some powerful endorsements from the physiological side, and by experimentation in the psychological laboratory—an institution quite unknown when Hume wrote. But, substantially, this theory holds the scientific field. The self is not something which exists prior to experience, and which is superior to experience, It is born of experience, and represents the sum total of the activities of the organism in given directions. Had Hume lived in our day he would undoubtedly have agreed with the leader of the Behaviouristic school of psychologists, that personality is the expression of "the total mass of organized habits; the socialized and regulated instincts, the socialized and tempered emotions; and the combinations and interrelations among these." Self as an entity is incon-

ceivable and useless, since we can only deal with self as the mass of the reactions of the organism to specific environmental activities. And from that point of view we are able to understand, not merely the existence of the self as a normal fact, but also its alterations and aberrations.

Now against the position outlined by Hume, the objection is raised that if I am merely the sum of my mental states, how do I come to be aware of the fact? If the self is a product of a series of mental states the knower of the series must be something distinct from the series. For a series has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and this must be known by someone or by something that contemplates the series as a whole. But without a something that knows the different stages of a process and relates them, a series, as a series, cannot exist. A sensation comes and goes. It cannot relate itself to a preceding one; that is dead. It cannot relate itself to a succeeding one; that is not yet born. What is required is something that will cognize each sensation as it arises, and relate it to that which is gone and that which is to follow.

Those who are conversant with the historic controversy over the doctrine of Association will recall the above as a re-statement of a very old objection. And the first comment I have to make is that the hypothesis of a transcendent self really does nothing at all to solve the puzzle. Every difficulty that stands in the way of accepting the ego as the expression of a fusion of mental states on the ground that this cannot be at once the known and the knower, applies with equal force to this assumed "self." How does the

ego become aware of itself? If it knows itself prior to experience, it is in the position of being both that which knows and that which is known at the same time, and the objection to the other theory falls to the ground. If it knows itself because of the sensations experienced, the doctrine attacked is reinstated under another name. There is surely no greater difficulty in realizing how a multitude of sensations become blended into a unity that appears as "self," than there is in understanding how a something that is independent of experience blends experience into a unity. To say that we know the ego connects these mental states because we know they are connected, is only stating the thing twice over. We know they are connected because there is the admitted fact of their connexion. *How* they are connected is the question at issue; and I hope to show that the neurological theory of their connexion answers the question well enough.

Altogether the soul theory gives no help. It only adds a difficulty to those that already exist. It is, as William James says, "a complete superfluity, so far as accounting for the verified facts of consciousness goes"; and Professor MacDougal, in his *Body and Mind* says:—

> It is matter of common knowledge that science has given its verdict against the soul; has declared that the conception of the soul as a thing, or being, or substance, or mode of existence, or activity, different from, distinguishable from, or in any sense or degree independent of the body, is a mere survival from primitive culture, one of the many relics of savage superstition that obstinately persists among us in defiance of the clear teachings of modern science.

Professor MacDougal's statement is the more telling from the fact that it occurs in a bulky volume written to re-establish some form of the theory which he declares has gone out of fashion. It is a pre-scientific form of thought, and until the student gets that well into his head, he has not taken the first step towards a genuine understanding of the question.

If I may anticipate, it is pertinent to point out that "self" is no more than a general name for a given class of phenomena, although once created it stalks through the world of philosophy with the autocratic serenity of a trades' union official issuing instructions. Such terms as "self," "mind," or "consciousness" are so frequently stumbling-blocks to an appreciation of the facts of the situation, that it might be well if we could, at least for a time, banish them from the world of science altogether. One school of psychologists actually proposes doing this in the case of consciousness, and William James says of this term :—

> It is the name of a nonentity, and has no right to a place among first principles. Those who still cling to it are clinging to a mere echo, the faint rumour left behind it by the disappearing "soul" upon the air of philosophy . . . For twenty years past I have mistrusted "consciousness" as an entity, for seven or eight years I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded.

The great problem is how to clear out these phantoms of primitive thought. It is not an easy task. They are established by tradition, supported by vested interests, and although quite unable to show

valid title deeds, demand undisturbed possession in virtue of lengthy occupation. "Clear out the ghosts," might well be the cry of all who aim at inducing useful scientific thinking.

The more carefully we study the manner in which personality is built up, the more impossible does the theory of an autonomous "self" become. Consciousness, which is often called in to pass judgment cannot help us. And all that we are ever conscious of is a sensation, or the memory of a sensation, or the relation between sensations, and of the flow of ideas. But of the nature of the process, of the way in which the past is linked to the present, in what way the stream of sensible experience is forged into an organic whole, consciousness can tell us nothing.

When it is said that the self maintains its identity over a lengthy period, while the body is not, are we to take that as an expression of the facts? I think not. It is no more true of the mind that it is of the body. There is, unquestionably, a physiological unity of the body. That is obvious and unquestioned. In spite of the changing material of which the body is composed, in spite of the radical changes that take place in bodily structure from birth to old age, there is maintained a physical continuity. This is because the changes that take place are gradually affiliated to the body pattern. The particles that replace the wear and tear of the body fall into their places, and take the shape of the body to which they belong. Why may not the same be true of the mental characteristics of the individual as a whole? Or by what right do we say that while the body changes the personality re-

mains constant? To speak of the "self" of the present moment as identical with the self of twenty years ago, is simply not true. Our ideas, our feelings, the range, the direction, the application of our emotions all undergo profound modifications, sometimes drastic changes, with the passing of the years. If these do not make us different personalities what will? We all recognize these changes, sometimes with pride, sometimes with sorrow, and our friends recognize them also. The ego, says Dr. Henry Maudesley, pithily, " is not a constant but a variable," and that gives the truth of the matter. There is no such constant self-unifying ego such as the ghost theory requires. There is a self continuously undergoing change, with a memory, more or less full, of innumerable past selves. It is memory that supplies the unifying link, not the impalpable ghost of the metaphysician or the theologian.

The cardinal weakness of most of the criticisms of Materialism in this connexion, is that they ignore the physical substratum which unquestionably underlies all mental phenomena. In arguing that there must be a conscious self which serves as the cause of the blending of mental states into a whole, the function of the nervous system is completely ignored. Mental states are treated, not merely as separable things, but as independent things. The criticism that a mental state which appears, disappears before its successor arises, and lacks, therefore, the condition of fusion or connexion, certainly does this. And that is ignoring one half of the problem before us. For a mental state is always the accompaniment of a neural

process. And in considering the nature of this we shall find all that is necessary to the establishment of a feeling of identity persisting throughout constant change.

Let us take, as an illustration, the case of muscular action. We are all familiar with the truth that within limits a muscle becomes stronger as it is used. It not only becomes stronger, but it responds with greater efficiency to the appropriate excitation. We see this in the ease with which athletes perform actions that once required time and reflection to consummate. The muscle not merely conserves the benefits of past action, it tends to reproduce the same kind of action. But this quality is not peculiar to muscular fibre. It is characteristic of all nerve tissue. Educability is the great and important fact here. All training is based on it. A child learning to play the piano has at first to pick out certain notes slowly and deliberately. After a time the notes are struck automatically, while the conscious attention may be directed elsewhere. Expressed in psychological terms the nerve tissue is contracting a memory. And nerve tissue not only learns, it forgets. Just as frequent repetition makes the performance of an action easy and automatic, so desistance makes repetition more difficult. In the one case, to use psychological language, the cells remember, in the other they forget.

It may be said that in speaking of the cells remembering and forgetting, I am in danger of mistaking a figure of speech for an actuality. The criticism is not so forceful as it appears at first sight. From the standpoint of the unity of the organism,

memory must involve some kind of molecular change, and in that case it is safe to assume that with every repetition of the change this molecular rearrangement becomes more definite and more easily made. Every discharge of molecular energy will, to use a phrase of Romanes', tread in the footsteps of its predecessor. On the psychological side there is a memory of previous events; on the physiological side there is the gradual alteration of nerve tissue, which always, to some extent, conserves the effects of past stimulations, and reproduces them under similar conditions.

Indeed, it is only by some such conception that we can picture to ourselves what we know is taking place. It is giving no information whatever to say that memory records past events. It is merely saying that memory memorizes, or that memory is the act of remembering, which, while good enough for a dictionary, is not very enlightening. But to say that the nervous structure registers impressions and reproduces them, that it is modified by practice, and so the more easily responds in a given direction, does actually tell us something since it exhibits a possible machinery for the process.

"Personality," says a recent writer on the subject, "can only have a meaning if thought of in terms of a synthesis."* With this I quite agree; and it is not difficult to see the manner in which the personality of each is built up. With the new-born child it is non-existent. We can, if we watch, actually see the child discovering itself. It discovers its limbs, as it

* Dr. R. G. Gordon. *Personality.* (1926).

discovers their uses. Probably vision is the beginning of this discovery, to be helped later by the sense of touch, and with increased experience the notion of a physical self is elaborated, as the basis for the development of psychic self. From thence onward as we watch the child's experience of home, of friends, note its passage through school life, its contact with the outside world, the influence of social forms and customs, we can see the steady formation of that bundle of specialized bodily and mental characteristics which we readily recognize as John Smith or Thomas Brown.

Moreover, although I have not now the space for elaboration, it may be pointed out that the sense of personal identity, the feeling of continuity persisting in the midst of change, depends not so much upon the operations of a mysterious "me" as it does upon the things thought about. If we were to imagine an organism living in a universe in which no two experiences, no two sensations were alike, it is difficult to see how a sense of personal identity could ever arise. We feel ourselves to be the same person to-day as yesterday, because we see the same objects and experience the same sensations and associations. It is not a mysterious "ego" that impresses itself upon the world, but the other way about. It is the things thought about, the uniformity of experiences, which, when appropriated by the organism, give rise to the feeling of self.

The human self is a manufactured thing, only to be understood in relation to the environment in which it is fashioned. Divorce it from this environment, and

not only does it cease to be intelligible, but it ceases to exist. How can one think of love of family apart from the procreation of children? Or of love of country, apart from the world in which we are living? What are we to make of comradeship, honesty, duty, justice, loyalty, truth, apart from an environment such as the one in which we are living? The one certain thing here is that our personality is fashioned not only by *an* environment, but by this environment, and can have meaning and application in this environment alone. It is plainly the environment which shapes the personality, and even though we were to admit the existence of the "self" as something that is independent of the body, in the absence of the body and its environment it would remain like the earth in the genesaic creation story, without shape or form, and we may add, without meaning.

If we turn from the side of health to that of disease we have evidence of another kind, but to the same end. On the one side we can watch the building-up of the sense of self, on the other we can watch its disintegration under the influence of disease or of abnormal conditions. In such cases as those of dual personality we have the phenomenon of two distinct "selves" showing themselves alternately, each living its own life, each with its own set of memories and character pattern. It is clear that the advocates of an independent entity can offer no explanation of these things. Why should the "self" undergo these marked changes? Why should the presence of disease change a good-tempered, easy-going individual into a querilous, fretful personage, with whom it becomes

almost a torture to live? Why should the self, which usually exhibits one set of characteristics suddenly and alternately exhibit another set? Of course, if we regard the "self" as, so to speak, the function of something else, the matter is understandable. We are witnessing the disorganization or disintegration of a personality which has been gradually built up. When we look at it from other points of view we are left asking which, of the many selves which the individual manifests from the cradle to the grave, is the true "self." Is it that of the child or the youth or that of the old man? Why should it be one rather than the other?

It must be borne in mind that I am not questioning that the term "self" stands for a fact, and for a very definite fact. It is only the Supernaturalist who makes the Materialist deny the obvious in order to make him stand for the absurd. We do recognize—all of us—that John Smith differs from Peter Robinson. We know that if Smith is brought up against a particular set of facts, he will be likely to react in one way, and that if Robinson is brought up against the same set of facts his reactions may be quite different.

In these cases what is called the personal equation, the character pattern of the individual will come in, and these account for the differences we note in the two individuals. It is not at all a question of denying the reality of self, but of attempting to give "self" a definite meaning. So far as my consciousness of the continuity of "self" is concerned, it would appear to be entirely a question of memory, or as it has been called of memory—synthesis. To be told that "I" am

conscious of continuity of my individuality, can only mean that I am able to relate certain experiences that have gone to experiences that are present, and to fuse them into a whole. But it is observable that this capacity of relating the past to the present exists, so far as consciousness is concerned, only to such states or to such experiences as I am able to recall. Our character pattern begins to be fashioned early in our lives, but of the earliest of these not a trace remains in our consciousness. Neither in feeling nor in memory am I identified with that far-away baby any more than I am identified with the personal experiences of the President of the United States. There is, of course, a trace of every experience in the whole of my make-up—but that is not quite the same question.

Just as there is this gap in my consciousness concerning my earliest years, so there are also gaps here and there, running right through the whole of my life. It is the capacity of relating the past to the present that certainly forms the basis of the sense of continuity; and where this does not exist, or where disease, or some other cause manages to break this sense of continuity, the sense of personal identity disappears. If people would only go straight to the facts, and ask their meaning, instead of first stating a belief, and then fighting for it, there would not be nearly so much mystery about these questions as there is at present.

The sense of personal identity means, then, the bringing together of a series of memories so as to form a definite and stable pattern. Apart from this, what

we have is only what has been called, in somewhat misleading language, a biological memory—an influence shown in a modification of nerve tissue of the incidence of forces on a plastic organism. But so far as a consciousness of personal identity is concerned, it is the memory of sights seen, of sensations experienced, the whole of the attachments of the organism, that give us the sense of persistence and identity. Where this memory does not exist, neither does a sense of the persistence of the "ego."

It would take too long to make an excursion into the region of pathology, but I will just refer to the many cases of men and women who are found wandering about with their memory gone, who have forgotten their names, their friends, and all details about their past lives. Or we might take the cases of men who from some injury have had their whole character changed from even tempered, honest, and reliable individuals, to dishonest, bad tempered, and uncertain persons. What, in such cases, has become of the persistence of the "self"? In some way or another the memory synthesis of that person has been destroyed, the unity of the self has been disturbed. If the old state can be restored, we shall have the old self manifesting itself. If this cannot be done, it will have gone for ever.

There is, however, the curious and suggestive fact, that a new memory synthesis may be built up, and a new individuality created. One way or another it is possible to observe, in general outline, at least, the building-up and disintegration of this mysterious "self" on a basis of change and continuity. The whole

belief in a "self" that is independent of experience is a heritage from the ghost theory of the savage. It has no other basis. So long as we think of human qualities as emanating from some mysterious entity working through the body, we are moving in a world of vague phrases in which indefiniteness of language passes for useful thinking. It is only when we deal with the whole manifestations of human organism in terms of organ and function or of structure and its "mergents" that we are clearing the road to more exact and more useful knowledge.

Printed and Published in Great Britain by
THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. FOOTE & CO., LTD.)
61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Issued and Sold by

THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. Foote & Co., Ltd.)

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Chapman Cohen :

GOD AND MAN. An Essay in Commonsense and Natural Morality. A Plea for Morality without God. 2d., postage ½d.

GOD AND EVOLUTION. Can a Christian Believe in Evolution? A Straightforward Essay on the Question. 6d., postage 1d.

BLASPHEMY. A plea for Religious Equality. 3d., postage ½d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY. With a Chapter on Christianity and the Labour Movement. Portrait and Illustration of the slave-ship *Brooke*. 1s., postage 1d.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY. The Story of the Exploitation of a Sex. 1s., postage 1d.

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES. 3d., postage ½d.

CREED AND CHARACTER. The Influence of Religion on Racial Life. 4d., postage 1d.

WAR AND CIVILIZATION. 1d., postage ½d.

DEITY AND DESIGN. An Examination of the Famous Argument of Design in Nature. 1d., postage ½d.

DOES MAN SURVIVE DEATH? Verbatim Report of a Debate with Mr. Horace Leaf. 4d., postage ½d.

THE PARSON AND THE ATHEIST. A Friendly Discussion with the Rev. E. Lyttelton, late Headmaster of Eton College. Covers most of the fundamental issues between Christians and Freethinkers. 6d., postage 1½d.

JOHN WILLIAM DRAPER:

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE. 395 pages. 2s., postage 4½d.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION. A Chapter from *The History of the Intellectual Development of Europe.* 2d., postage ½d.

H. G. FARMER:

HERESY IN ART. The Religious Opinions of Famous Artists and Musicians. 2d., Postage ½d.

G. W. FOOTE:

CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. With a Chapter on Mohammedanism. 2d., postage ½d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. 2d., postage ½d.

WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JESUS? 1d., postage ½d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians. (With W. P. BALL.) Seventh Edition. 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

BIBLE ROMANCES. 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. Translated from the Hebrew. Preface by G. W. FOOTE, 6d., postage ½d.

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL:

MISTAKES OF MOSES. 2d., postage ½d.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 1d., postage ½d.

IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 2d., Postage ½d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? Contains Col. Ingersoll's Confession of Faith. 1d., postage ½d.

WHAT IS IT WORTH? A Study of the Bible. 1d., postage ½d.

J. T. Lloyd :

GOD-EATING. A Study in Christianity and Cannibalism. 3d., postage ½d.

M. M. Mangasarian :

THE MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA. 1d., postage ½d.

W. Mann :

MODERN MATERIALISM. A Candid Examination. Paper, 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL. With a Chapter on Infidel Death-Beds. 3d., postage 1d.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. 2d., postage ½d.

THE RELIGION OF FAMOUS MEN. 1d., postage ½d.

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA. An Exposure of Foreign Missions. Price 6d., postage 1d.

Gerald Massey :

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MYTHICAL CHRIST. A Demonstration of the Origin of Christian Doctrines in the Egyptian Mythology. 6d., postage 1d.

A. D. McLaren :

THE CHRISTIAN SUNDAY: ITS HISTORY AND ITS FRUITS. 2d., postage ½d.

C. E. Volney :

RUINS OF EMPIRES. With the Law of Nature. Revised Translation, with Portrait, Plates, and Preface by George Underwood. 5s., postage 3d.

Voltaire.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY. A Selection of all the Articles bearing on Religion. Unabridged. First Series. 6d., postage 1d.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, Limited.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.
Secretary: MISS E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes. THE Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrace fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings. The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re* Bowman and Others *v.* the Secular Society, Limited, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators :—

> I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £—— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

UC-NRLF
$B 495 864

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

Chapman Cohen

BERKELEY
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/othersideofdeath00coherich

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

WORKS BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

RELIGION AND SEX; Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development, 6s.

THEISM OR ATHEISM? The Great Alternative, 5s.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT, 5s.

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL, 2s. 6d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY; With a chapter on the Labour Movement, 1s.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY; The story of the Exploitation of a Sex, 1s.

CREED AND CHARACTER; The Influence of Religion on Racial Life, 7d.

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES, 3d.

Etc., Etc.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Future Life, with a Study of Spiritualism.

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

LONDON:
THE PIONEER PRESS,
61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.

1922.

LOAN STACK

Printed and Published by
THE PIONEER PRESS
(G. W. Foote & Co., Ltd.),
61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

BT901
C6

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Some General Considerations	7
II.	Is there a Desire for a Future Life? ...	19
III.	The Appeal to Facts	35
IV.	Soul or Mind?	43
V.	Professor James to the Rescue	57
VI.	The Appeal to Morality	64
VII.	Is this Life Enough?	75
VIII.	The Question of Waste	90
IX.	The Source of the Soul	98
X.	Spiritualism—I.	114
XI.	Spiritualism—II.	130

PREFACE.

—o—

If on a given subject knowledge was absolute men would move on a level of complete equality. And the same equality would prevail where ignorance was complete. From that point of view the present writer may claim to know as much as any man living on "the other side of death"—that is, if we accept the phrase literally. But while a demonstration of general ignorance would not be without its uses, it is not the main theme of this work. *The Other Side of Death* has reference to that aspect, or to those aspects, of death which popular theology leave entirely out of account. There it is commonly assumed that either we must accept the established religious interpretations of death, and of all the feelings that cluster round it, or we are doomed to disheartening pessimism. I hope sincerely that readers of these pages will realize that neither view is justifiable. Death has its place in the evolutionary process, and when that is understood theology loses its force and its terrors. If the author has succeeded in placing before his readers a rational and a satisfactory account of the feelings that are inseparable from the fact of death he will have accomplished the purpose with which he set out.

C. C.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

If universality of belief were really a guarantee of truth, then, indeed, would the belief in survival beyond death be entitled to rank as one of the best authenticated of human convictions. For in some form or another it is found with all peoples, even in those cases where it may reasonably be questioned whether the belief in God exists. It has come to us through the ages, kept alive by the combined forces of the self-interest which attaches to all established institutions, and the love of speculation which is, after all, one of the worthiest of human endowments. We owe more to this quality than is at first sight apparent. And this last statement remains true even where the belief with which speculation busies itself is of little intrinsic value.

The belief in survival does, indeed, appear to lie at the root of all other religious beliefs. It is at least certain that all the priesthoods of the different religions derive their power and prestige and emoluments from it, for it is unlikely that the mere belief in

deity would be enough to secure them the allegiance of the multitude. The belief in God is only an active force so long as the deity is believed to interfere actively and constantly in the affairs of men. And science has removed so much from the control of the gods, they do so little in the world to-day, they promise to do so much less in the future, that mere gratitude for having done something in the past, or for having conferred upon man the debatable gift of existence, would hardly be strong enough to secure to their representatives the positions of power and privilege which they enjoy.

It is, as Lucretius saw, death and the fear of what comes after death that has in all ages given the priesthood its power. Useful functions the priest may perform, but these are discharged in his character as citizen, not in his capacity as a priest. As a priest he is concerned with what lies beyond this world; men have feared him because of his supposed influence with the mysterious powers that were assumed to govern destiny here and hereafter; and even to-day, when the belief itself is wearing thin, and its expression undergoing so great an outward transformation, it is in virtue of the old formulæ and the old forms that the allegiance of men and women is retained.

But, in sober truth, it is to-day quite as much with the believer as with the belief that the Freethinker is concerned. It is this that justifies an examination of a belief which, in the opinion of the present writer, represents nothing better than a gigantic illusion, and which even if it were not, for reasons that will presently be advanced, might well be left aside as of no pressing importance. When Colonel Ingersoll was

accused of hating Christians he explained that he did not hate the man because he had got Christianity, he hated Christianity because it had got the man. So our chief anxiety in settling whether the belief in a future life is true or not lies, not with the belief itself, but with those who hold it. One has only to recall the part played by religious organizations in the social economy, and the time and energy spent on religion, to realize the importance of the beliefs upon which they build. If the world has really given way to an illusion, then in some way or another that illusion must be dispelled. And, after all, a great deal of the world's progress has consisted in clearing out of the way illusions that were once as world-wide as the belief in a future life. Battles, both physical and mental, are fought not always over what is actually true, but over what people believe to be so.

But, more so than is the case with other subjects, anyone who attempts to deal with the question of a future life runs no small risk of being drowned under successive waves of sentimentality. He is met, not with what people ought to believe, or what they are justified in believing, but what they would like to believe, or what it is pleasant to believe. Or, with tremendous solemnity he is informed how greatly the belief has ennobled life, robbed death of its terrors, and given comfort to the sorrow-stricken. In this way the believer manages to convince himself that he is advocating a nobler view of life than is the Freethinker, who is pilloried as a being of coarser grain, careless of what the consequences may be of his teaching. And as few care to stand before the public in the character depicted by the believer, we have only too

often a repudiation of the belief in survival in tones that would suggest one were giving up something of a demonstrated value, instead of a belief that has been responsible for incalculable misery.

For my own part I am quite convinced that the belief in a future life has never divested death of a single terror which it did not first of all create; and that it has ennobled life is sheer assumption. Indeed, one purpose of this work is to prove that the belief in a future life has caused far more misery than happiness, and that in spite of the use of certain stereotyped formulæ by such as believe, believers show no greater fortitude in the presence of death than does the most convinced sceptic. Faced with facts human nature is apt to show scant consideration for the requirements of mere theory.

Each of these points, with others, will be dealt with in detail later. But a word or two may now be said concerning the assumption that disbelief in a future state involves a " lower " view of life than does a belief in its existence. And here I am genuinely puzzled to realize in what way perpetual existence is higher or nobler than existence of a definite, if incalculable, term. I can understand the claim that life is morally admirable or the reverse, or that it would have been far better for all of us—to put the matter paradoxically —had we never existed. But what has the question of length to do with nobility? It is a commonplace that a life which terminates at forty may be infinitely more admirable than one that extends to a century. And it is equally true that of many lives the only cause they offer for congratulation is that they come to an end. But it is certainly an ill measure of a man's worth to

count the number of years during which he treads the earth. And if the life of a century has no more intrinsic claim to admiration than one of half that length, then it follows that an eternity of life has no advantage over that of a century. It is not a question of quantity but of quality. That life is good or bad are both intelligible and arguable propositions, but whether we conclude that it is one or the other we must base our conclusion upon life as we know it. If we conclude that life is good, then cutting it short at the grave cannot make it bad. We merely desire more of it. If it is bad, prolonging it will not make it better. In that case we only have cause to regret its being. As the Irish orator declared, we should all have been money in pocket had we never been born.

Of course, it is argued that an extension of life beyond the grave gives opportunities for the correction of faults and for the development of character, but those who so argue mistake the meaning of character and the conditions of its development. With that, also, we will deal later. At present it is enough to assert that the belief in a future life deserves no greater measure of respect than does any other speculative belief. If, indeed, this particular belief has become closely associated with some of our deepest and tenderest feelings there is the greater need to be on our guard against the distorting effects of emotion on what should be a strictly scientific enquiry. The essential question is, "Is the belief in a future life true?" If that question is settled everything else may be left to take care of itself.

While there are many extrinsic circumstances that make a discussion of the truth of a future life of some

value, the intrinsic importance of the belief is of the slightest. Immortality is not, it may be noted, something that each of us may achieve or fail to achieve. It is ours as a natural endowment, or the whole thing is an illusion. If it is a fact there is enough, so to speak, to go round. Nothing that we can say or do can alter the fact of immortality, or make it a fact if it is not already one. Either immortality is ours already or it is not. If it is, the only question at issue is the date of our entering the next stage. And there, we are told, arises the whole question. It is whether we enter that next stage prepared to make the most of it and the best of it that makes the question of our belief so important. For it is in view of this continuous development that we should regulate our lives here.

On that two comments may be made. First, if our life there is really a development of our life here, our state in the next stage will be a consequence of our present existence as youth follows boyhood and old age maturity. In that case our immediate and our real concern is with the life we are now leading, and there is no other preparation possible. We do the day's work as well as we can, and there our concern ends. If, on the other hand, attention to life here is not the best preparation for the assumed life hereafter, then the talk of development is the idlest of chatter, and the belief in a future life can only be regarded as a cause of distraction from duty now. The tendency will be to belittle and neglect this life as we are assured of the reality and the importance of another one. Historically, this is what has actually happened whenever there has been a very vivid sense of the reality of a future life. The future is so vast and overpowering

in relation to the present, it is small wonder that a people who permitted it to dominate their thoughts to any serious extent should be proportionately indifferent about the present state of existence.

Second, it is simply untrue to say that the question of a future life is of primary or of pressing importance. It is a curiously distorted vision that can take that view. There are a hundred and one things in which my opinion as to their truth or falsity or utility is of infinitely greater moment than my belief concerning a future life. My convictions concerning sanitation, or the need for light and air, or the fitness of certain people for holding office in the State, may have important and traceable consequences on the life of society. But my belief as to whether there is a future life or not does not clearly affect anything. Those who do not believe in a future life are found to be as loyal, as generous, as devoted to what they believe to be right as are those with the most fervent belief in a life beyond the grave. Clearly, a belief that does not of necessity affect conduct one way or the other cannot well be argued to be of pressing importance. One might as well argue the urgency of settling whether the other side of the moon is habitable.

Yet again it is argued that they who really believe in a future life have a driving power that cannot be equalled by anything else. But here we have only substituted a psychological fallacy for a mis-statement of fact. Any belief, no matter how absurd or how devoid of foundation in fact, so long as it is held with sincerity, and is allied to an earnest nature, will have the same effect. A belief in vegetarianism, in the simple life, even the belief in the necessity for destroy-

ing the belief in immortality, will have the same effect. All that is needed to give a belief "driving power" is—belief. Love of country, love of home, devotion to any ideal is enough to carry a man out of the narrow circle of his egoistic desires, even to the point of sacrificing his life. The man who fails to see that teachings of the most diverse nature and value may claim examples of glorious devotion and ungrudging sacrifice reads history with eyes that are blind to its most obvious lessons.

In the emphasis that is placed upon the alleged elevating influence of the belief in immortality the effect it has had in quite an opposite direction is conveniently forgotten. And yet that aspect of the history of the belief in a future life lies plain for all to see. Living in the environment of to-day it is almost impossible to realize adequately the fear, the degrading fear, which was bred by the Christian doctrine of an after life. And Christian teachers take care that the truth about their religion in this respect shall not be known if they can prevent it. Certainly nothing coarser or more brutalizing than the Christian doctrine of an after life has ever been known. By no less a person than Augustine the whole of the human race was described as being "one damned batch and mass of perdition," and at a much later date Jeremy Taylor could declare, in depicting the condition of the saved, that "husbands shall see their wives, parents shall see their children tormented before their eyes," while "the bodies of the damned shall be crowded together in hell like grapes in a wine press till they burst." Jonathan Edwards also assures us that "God holds sinners in his hands over the

mouth of hell as so many spiders, and he is dreadfully provoked, and he not only hates them, but holds them in utmost contempt, and he will trample them beneath his feet with inexpressible fierceness, he will crush their blood out, and will make it fly so that it will sprinkle his garments and stain all his raiment." These are only specimen quotations, they could be multiplied almost without end, but it does not need much imagination to conceive the terribly brutalizing consequences of teachings of this kind forced upon people from their earliest years. It was only at the price of brutalization that ordinary folk could retain their sanity.

Certainly one may say with safety that while such beliefs are seriously accepted as unquestionable truths, their influence must have been of the most demoralizing kind. Just as when one is brought into daily contact with intolerable cruelty the prevalence of such things can only eventuate in the creation of an abnormal sensitiveness on the one side and a steady process of brutalization on the other. It is utterly impossible for normal human nature to go on believing that the majority of their fellow creatures are destined to the kind of eternal torments depicted by the Christian writers without having their sympathies narrowed, their natures coarsened, and their sense of justice constricted. As a matter of fact the prevalence of these teachings produced a Christian society with a limited number of more refined natures exhibiting a fantastic sensitiveness that borders on the insane, with the overwhelming proportion leading an almost animal existence. And although not the only cause of demoralization sanctioned by the Christian Church, its

doctrine of immortality must be held partly responsible for the terrible coarsening of manners that characterized the Christian ages of the world.

While I write the above, and as an illustration of what has been said, I come across the following from a living leader of English Nonconformity which deserves chronicling as an example of Christian barbarism at the close of the nineteenth century. The Rev. R. F. Horton, a preacher whose sincerity none will question, after dwelling upon the thesis that "everything before death is determined by what we expect after death," says:—

> Men who do not believe in their immortality, if I may use strong and colloquial language, are a public nuisance. They bestialize life, they lower the tone of everything, they make the world a huge graveyard, where the only thought is to eat and drink, and to try to forget that to-morrow we die. I would mark them all, and avoid them, and if they cannot change their mind they should be ostracised from a human society which depends for all vitality and for all progress upon a great and permanent belief in the immortality of man.[1]

Ill-balanced fanaticism and sectarianism could hardly go further than this. Coming from a mediæval monk, or from a gutter evangelist it would be bad enough, coming from one of the leaders of English Nonconformity such sentiments offer irrefutable evidence of the little influence this particular belief has in effecting a genuine moralization of character. The worst

[1] Sermon reported in the *Christian World Pulpit*, December 6, 1899.

that one could say concerning the influence of the belief in immortality receives the fullest justification from such an utterance. A man's judgment must be indeed warped when he can frame an indictment which would exclude from human society some of the foremost men and women of our time on the ground that they bestialize life, and lower the tone of everything. On the contrary, one might say that the departure from human society of men of the type of mind of Dr. Horton is an event that one could face without very serious misgivings as to the future of the race.

There is really only one way in which it could be shown that belief in immortality is of vital consequence to human society. This would be by proving that in its absence human nature either stagnates or deteriorates. But this no one has ever been able to prove. Historically we do not find that nations progress with the strengthening of this belief and deteriorate with its weakening. The evidence is rather the other way about, for from the time of ancient Egypt it has been those who have had the belief in a future life most clearly expressed in their lives that have gone down before those with whom the belief was of a more formal nature. And the same thing holds broadly of individuals; for to argue that individual life deteriorates with a rejection of this belief is wildly untrue. Unbelievers are no longer such rarities as they once were. They are common, their lives are open to the world, and believers meet them in daily intercourse. Believers know that in discharging all the functions of ordinary citizenship the lives of unbelievers move on at least as high a level as do their own. They are quite as ready as others to devote

their lives, their resources, to any cause in which they believe, and they at least can assert that their endeavours are not in the nature of investments that are put out at interest payable in another world. And to those who adopt the tone of mediæval survivals such as Dr. Horton, there is always open the retort that sweating employers, and slum landlords, and unscrupulous financiers, and shady politicians, as well as actually declared criminals are far more frequent in their avowal of belief in immortality than they are in professions of disbelief. If daily experience enforces any lesson at all it is that a good life may be lived and is lived without the remotest reference to a future state of existence. This world holds many good and beautiful things, and it offers opportunities for the display of many good and beautiful qualities, whether there is another life or not. And that is surely the most depressing form of pessimism which asserts that the love of husband and wife, of parent and child, the loyalty of friends, and the glories of art, science and literature are all so much dross unless we live again beyond the grave.

In what follows we shall have to examine in detail many of the points that have here received only a brief notice. What has been said is preliminary to an examination of one of the most wide-spread and, fundamentally, harmful illusions from which humanity has ever suffered.

CHAPTER II.

IS THERE A DESIRE FOR A FUTURE LIFE?

TAKE a hundred people haphazard and ask each of them the question, "Do you believe in a future life?" It is quite probable that an overwhelming majority will answer in the affirmative. Nor would it be far to seek to find the cause of this unanimity. Each of these hundred persons has been brought up in an atmosphere that is, at least professedly, a religious one, and in which a formal adherence is given to certain religious beliefs. Most of them are quite unused to self-analysis, and accustomed to express themselves in terms of the current theology. From that point of view, therefore, the answer to the question is prepared before it is asked. Moreover, in a society such as ours there is an accepted tradition in our general literature which echoes what theology teaches because it has been developed under its influence. Nothing is commoner than to find it assumed that in some way a future life completes and embellishes this one, and also the complementary tradition that those who do not accept the belief are robbed of a comfort and an inspiration which others possess, and what is more, they feel their loss. These things are not argued, they are assumed, and because they are assumed without warranty are held to be unquestionable.

A groundless assumption is followed by an im-

pertinence. The next step is the assertion that the man who professes to be without the desire for a future life is abnormal, or, at best, is only illustrating a passing phase of temper. To use a common illustration, he is like a deaf mute denying the existence of sound. I believe, however, that closer analysis will show that the abnormality, if it exists anywhere, lies with those who fancy that the value and meaning of this life is to be found in the existence of some future state. And I think it can be shown, when we examine the contents of the mind, that with the normal person there exists no real desire for a future life, little genuine belief in it, and no evidence that it provides comfort in face of disaster. All that is needed to prove these things is to separate the expressed belief from the various factors with which it has been associated. In brief, what we have here is not a statement of fact, but an interpretation of certain facts. The religious man says one thing when he really ought, in justice to his own feeling, to say something quite different.

Let me venture on a piece of self-analysis. So far as I am able to understand my own frame of mind I have no conscious desire for a life beyond the grave. I am conscious of a desire for life, or negatively, a disinclination for death, but that is all. On the other hand I am not conscious of any disinclination to live again, my mind here is simply a blank. If I permit myself to speculate on the matter I can easily conceive circumstances that would make perpetual existence a curse, or, at best, a burden. But I am conscious of nothing in the shape of regrets. Mentally I can no more conceive existence after I am dead than I can picture myself as living before I was born. Or,

yet again, I can easily picture to myself the growth of an abnormal state of mind in favour of either existence or non-existence. It is possible to so dwell upon a fancied desire for a thing that the possession of it appears to be one of the most imperative of needs.

If it is said that I may have a desire to live again, not to satisfy some purely selfish feeling, but in order to meet again those whom I have known and loved here, I can only say, still keeping to the territory of my own consciousness—which as evidence is quite as good as that of anybody else—that I am not at all conscious of a desire to meet anyone in the next world. I desire to meet and to be with them here; I regret most keenly the separation caused by death, but it is only by a misunderstanding of frustrated feeling that this is read as a desire to meet beyond the grave. What I have, in common with others, is a desire for intercourse with certain members of my kind. But it is surely gratuitous to argue from this a desire for communion after death.

It may be said that in thus arguing I am avowing myself as a kind of human monstrosity, and therefore my feelings offer no criterion by which to judge others. But my whole argument is that, far from being either unique or abnormal, I am perfectly normal, and that if others will only analyse their own mental states they will find that they are much as I am. The recognition that we are all much alike in our fundamental characteristics is, indeed, one of the prime requirements to an understanding of many of the things over which we are so gravely puzzled. We all have the same feelings, the same passions, and, fundamentally, the same appetites. It is in our beliefs concerning

them, and in our modes of interpreting them, that we differ most widely. And it is just here that education plays its part for good or ill. It may quite easily develop a morbid or a false view of life, or encourage an unwarrantable belief concerning the nature of our mental states. It is not so long ago the theory of demoniacal possession was held to be the true explanation of epilepsy, and the proof of the theory was the existence of the disease. But the disease remains, it is the explanation that has disappeared. Mankind is always dealing with the same things, it is the point of view from which they are studied that undergoes change.

And it is certainly strange, if there did really exist a strong desire for a future life, that mankind in general should to-day be so little concerned about it, and should be still less anxious to realize it. In their normal movements men and women show but little interest in the question of survival. In social circles it is voted bad form to dwell upon it, and a discussion on death and immortality would be a wet blanket in most gatherings. There are thousands of preachers who during their professional hours harp upon the overwhelming importance of a future life. Yet the people to whom they preach show no greater interest in it than those who do not believe, and in the presence of death show no more fortitude and display no less grief than do those who have ceased to believe. Even the preachers themselves are driven to admit that their followers live far more for the things of time than for those of eternity. To rouse a fervid state of mind concerning a future life something startling is needed, or a morbid love of the mysterious must be excited, or

one must be shaken out of his normal condition by a great and overwhelming misfortune. Normally man does not act as though he is longing for a future life. He is content, rightly and healthily content, with this one.

Now if there existed a strong, a real desire for a future life this condition of things would be impossible. During the war we know that all were anxious to get news from the front because of the eagerness with which it was received and the efforts made to get it. And in other directions we are able to gauge the strength of a desire by the efforts made to gratify it. We know, for example, that men desire wealth, power, position, fame, because we find them suffering all sorts of dangers and expending considerable energy in getting these things. But we do not find men and women in any considerable number doing anything whatever either to satisfy themselves that another world exists or making the least effort to realize it. The news of the discovery of a new goldfield would send thousands hurrying to take advantage of the find. The announcement of a new argument for immortality would leave most people quite cold. They are content to express an easy-going assent to the veracity of the belief, but it is never made the ground of applied effort or deliberate and sustained action—or if such instances do occur, believers are the first to allege that a want of mental balance is the cause of so unusual a phenomenon.

But in the presence of a genuine desire for another life this state of things would be impossible. There would be the same eagerness to secure its gratification that one witnesses in connection with other strong con-

victions or imperative desires. And in that case life here would tend to become what the earlier and more honest theologians called it, a burden, and we should receive the call to another world with the same gladness that we receive the news of an appointment to a much sought for position. But this is clearly not the case. Our anticipated elevation to another world is not regarded as a blessing, but as a disaster. If one tells the most fervent believer that he is going "home" he receives the news with anything but a look of relief, and his first thought afterwards is not to make his peace with heaven but to call on the doctor in the hopes of delaying his departure. And even the clergy nowadays resent the imputation that their chief task is to prepare their flocks for another life. Practically, they say that the next world will take care of itself. Their aim, they say, is to teach people to live well in this world. Laity and clergy thus give the lie to the existence of any strong desire for a life beyond the grave. They act upon the principle that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush—particularly when one can't see the bush.[1]

Another and a very pertinent comment on the

[1] "Even those surest of heaven stay here to the last possible moment, even though their lives in this world be miserable. Does not this show that the post-mortem life is a convention, a dream-wish? If we were told of a continent of fabulous health and charm, and believed it all, we should go to it by individuals, families, tribes, and leave the fatherland untenanted, although we had to brave dark and tempestous seas to get there. We should not ritually pray against a sudden transit, or be called fanatics if we voluntarily crossed the tide because the old world had become intolerably hard for us." —Professor Stanley Hall. Cited by Professor Leuba, *The Belief in God and Immortality*, p. 304.

assertion that the desire for immortality is a characteristic of human nature in its normal aspects, is found in the existence of such a philosophy as Buddhism. Here we have a creed that is accepted by several hundreds of millions of people, and with whom, instead of personal immortality being one of their expressed desires, the teaching is that it is a curse rather than a blessing. The mere existence of a system such as Buddhism is enough to prove that the attachment of the Christian to the theory of the permanence of individuality, even when it is a genuine expression of feeling, is no more than a consequence of an education that has been going on for generations. But for the main part it is not genuine. It is no more than the repetition of a phrase which owes its currency to existence in a particular social environment.

But there is a very valid reason for the fact that the desire for a future life should never assume a very strong or overpowering form. The whole course of evolution is against it. In the first place it must be borne in mind that all development in the animal world, whether it be of structure or function, takes place in relation to a definite environment. In fact, one may say that the environment and the organism are so interwoven that they are little more than two aspects of the same thing. A feeling, or an instinct must, therefore, hold some relation to an environment with which the organism is in contact, it simply cannot be developed with regard to an environment with which the organism has no relation whatever. And whatever future is implied in animal development it must be in relation to one that exists this side of the grave, not in relation to some future of which

members of the species have no experience. Every instinct that is developed, whether of play or the parental instinct, or of self-preservation, has sole reference to the environment of which the species has already had experience. This is equally true of what may be called fundamental desires. They are all based upon racial experience, and the promise of their gratification is given in this life, not in some fancied other state of existence.

Moreover, as some degree of utility is a condition of development, whether we are dealing with structures or with feelings, it is certain that no instinct or desire can develop to the point of becoming a racial danger. And a race of people to whom death was an ever present object of contemplation, and with whom there existed a strong desire for a future life, would be handicapped in the struggle for existence. Death would not only loom larger than life, it would become, as Christian theology has so often taught, an all-important consideration, dwarfing everything else, and leaving man, if not nerveless, at least careless in the face of the calls of every-day life.

One may sum it up by saying that it is not the significance of death and the hereafter that is of consequence, but a feeling of the profound importance of the present and its possibilities. And in the face of these possibilities even death must become of subsidiary importance. That is, indeed, the lesson of all heroic lives, the profound conviction that in face of the needs of this life, of the possibilities of development which it offers, there are times when even personal existence must be sacrificed. But the heroic exists, not in virtue of the effect of conduct in deter-

mining our condition in some future state of existence, but in its bearing upon the social life of the race.

It is, of course, possible to see in the lives of individuals illustrations of an extreme obsession with a future state of existence, and in individual cases society can put up with almost any degree of abnormality. We see this illustrated in the case of insanity and of pronounced disease. But while society may be able to afford these things as expressions of individual peculiarity, no society could exist if they were to become normal. In the long run the feelings that are paramount, the tastes that direct human desire, the motives that urge to action, must be of a kind that is consonant with the well-being of the social structure. And the net result of all this has been that, while there has been, on the one hand, a literary and theological tradition of the overwhelming importance of a future life, there are few things about which men and women have bothered less, and there are few beliefs the disappearance of which would affect our lives less. It has been a fight between life and theory. On the one hand the religious endeavour has been to develop in man a strong desire for a future life. On the other hand both natural and social selection have worked so as to keep this desire weak and fitful in the interests of the species. The thought of death, it is true, can never be suppressed, and we shall see in a future chapter that it is well it should not be. But while death is always in evidence, the development of our feelings concerning it is ultimately governed by the exigencies of life.

That the desire for a future state of existence may not be anything like so strong as our theological

teachers would have us believe is a reflection that sometimes dawns upon the advocates of immortality. Thus, in a small work, *The Immortal Hope,* Dr. S. H. Mellone remarks: " It is possible that inquiries made systematically among intelligent people might suggest that the strength of the desire for another life is overrated, that a vast number do not care, while many would prefer annihilation " (p. 5). That really exact inquiry and honest replies would show this I for one do not doubt for a moment. The difficulty is to get people either to analyse their own mental states with sufficient detachment and knowledge to make their replies of value, or to answer openly a question in connection with which any reply other than a particular one involves a certain amount of social discomfort. Where enquiries have been conducted the results have never been favourable to the traditional view, and have often been directly against it. Thus, in an exhaustive enquiry conducted in the United States by Professor Leuba it was found that less than half of those questioned professed a desire for immortality, and even then no notice was taken of how far the replies were due to a misunderstanding or a misinterpretation of normal feelings, and which a truly scientific psychology would explain in a very different manner. And it is just this habit of interpreting feelings in terms of current teaching that plays into the hands of the purveyors of superstition.

So, again, we have Dr. Osler, in the course of his Ingersoll lecture on " Science and Immortality," affirming that " the desire for immortality seems never to have had a very strong hold upon mankind," and that " practical indifference is the modern attitude of

mind." Even the popular superstition that the desire for immortality grows keener as man nears death he declares to be "erroneous," and adds: —

> I have careful records of about 500 death beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pains or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no signs one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting. The preacher was right; in this respect man hath no pre-eminence over the beast, "as the one dieth, so dieth the other."

Substantially the same conclusion might be reached by anyone who cared to collect cases of actual experiences instead of repeating, parrot-like, the age-long falsities of the pulpit.

Mention was made above of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of normal feelings. And that leads me to what I regard as the heart of the question. For when it is said that men do not really desire a future life it is not meant that an assertion to the contrary is not honestly enough made in a large number of cases. But is there any stronger reason why we should take as final a man's account of the nature of his own feelings than there is that we should accept his account of the nature of an organic complaint? In my opinion there is not the slightest justification for our so doing. All we are warranted in saying is that there is some desire present, but whether it is of the nature described is quite another question. There is often a world of difference between description and analysis.

I believe the correct account of the nature of this alleged desire for a future life was given by Professor Metchnikoff in his suggestive work *The Nature of Man*. He there puts the question, Why is it, seeing that all men must die, there has not been an instinct developed in relation to so universal and so inescapable a fact as death, as instincts have been developed in relation to other normal and universal happenings? In other cases, where a particular phase of existence is uniformly experienced, there is developed in the organism some kind of a reactive preparation for it. Thus, there is with man the gregarious instinct which fits him for associated life, there is the play instinct which prepares him for the real life of maturity, there is the sex instinct which expresses itself as the young human being approaches adolescence. But in the case of death, which meets every one sooner or later, there is no such preparation, save in an insignificant number of cases. Why is this? Why is man so ill prepared to meet a fact which he cannot for ever avoid? Why, to put the matter in another way, has not man an instinct for death as he has an instinct for life, so that on the approach of death he should be organically prepared for it in the same way that he is organically prepared for the other main crises of his existence? Of course, we may have here no more than another case of disharmony between man and his environment, but it is in the light of this mal-adaptation that we must look for an explanation of that clinging to life which is seized upon by the religionist as proof of man's desire for a future life.

We may commence with the fact that there is an obvious desire for life with all normal animal forms.

To explain this we need go no further than the struggle for existence, for in the absence of a more or less developed " will to live " a species of animals would soon disappear before its more virile competitors. The desire for life, or in its negative aspect, an avoidance of death, is thus no more than one of the conditions of existence. To say that a species of animals persists, and to say that it has a desire for life, are only two ways of expressing the same fact.

Again, we may say, rather as a rough and ready way of inducing a mental picture than as an exact description of what is the case, that every human being starts life with a certain physiological impetus, or, what amounts to the same thing, with the capacity for generating a physiological energy that will serve to preserve life, the psychological side of which is the desire to live. If, now, we assume that the life of each organism flowed on so regularly and so smoothly that death came only when the physiological capacity of the organism was wholly and completely exhausted, there would be a corresponding exhaustion of the psychological expression also. We may assume, I think, that something like this occurs periodically in sleep, where the temporary exhaustion of the powers of the organism induces a desired unconsciousness. And there seems little reason for doubting that if we were to live in such a way that death came only when the physiological strength of the body was completely exhausted, we should die as we sleep, not with a sense of losing something that we desire to retain, but with a complete readiness for rest. We should no longer have the desire for life, because we should have lost the motive power which gave that desire its being. In a

few cases that does occur now, but the vast majority of deaths happen in different circumstances.

We die, as Metchnikoff points out, deaths of disease. Our deaths are deaths of violence, or of disease—which is only violence in another form. Our deaths are due to the breakdown of parts of the organism, which throws the whole of the structure out of gear. Death takes place while the physiological vitality of parts of the organism is still strong, and while its psychological equivalent, the instinct for life, is strong also. We shrink from death because we have not yet exhausted the desire for life. The desire for more life is the cry of the organism to spend its still unexhausted capacities for living, What we have here is, not a phenomenon that requires a transcendental explanation, but one which may be fully accounted for in terms of the known qualities and capacities of the human structure.

In a later chapter we shall have to deal with the conditions that give even death its compensating features. At present we are concerned with the way in which it is made to bolster up a supposed desire for a life beyond the grave.

From what has been said it is clear that the real question with which we have to deal is the existence of a desire for life here. But what the theologian says, in substance, is " You desire to live, but that you cannot live longer here is evidence that you will live elsewhere." And that conclusion is not only without proof, it is also absolutely irrelevant. The proof of this is that if those with the desire for life could go on living here there is not one of them who would wish to live anywhere else. There is no desire for a

future life, there is only a desire for continued life. There is a shrinking from non-existence, partly because of the causes already dealt with, partly because it is easier to think of oneself continuing to exist than it is to think of one passing out of existence. But the desire to live has, so to speak, no fixed form. It is fluid, and may assume any form that is prompted by environmental circumstances. And it is on this fact that the theologian builds. Just as in the one case the fullest life spells military glory, to another political or literary renown, so the religious advocate seizes hold of the formless desire for life and explains and exploits it as a desire for a life beyond the grave. One might as reasonably argue that because a man dies with a desire for wealth ungratified, therefore there will be another world in which he will possess fabulous riches.

Analysis thus explains both the persistence of the doctrine of survival and its failure to exert a commanding influence on life. It has been persistent because there have always been the facts of death and the desire for life on which it might build its mistaken interpretation. But it has failed to impress people with a sense of its paramount importance because human feelings are of necessity developed with reference to the present life and to the present life alone. Otherwise, racial suicide would have been accomplished long ago. And thus while in theory the religious interpretation has been generally accepted, social forces have effectually prevented its exercising a decisive influence on life. Life is, in the long run, too strong for religion. And one of the conditions of the survival of any theory is that however harmful it

may be, its harmfulness in practice must not exceed the point at which it threatens the existence of social life. Otherwise, there is an end to both the theory and to those who uphold it.

Finally, suppose one were to grant that there did really exist a genuine desire for a life beyond the grave. Would that, of necessity, carry with it even a reasonable presumption in favour of immortality? The existence of a desire proves only—that a desire exists. There is no warranty whatever for assuming that its existence is a guarantee that one day the desire will be gratified. All sorts of things are desired by all sorts of people without their being realized in fact. One man desires an income of £1,000 a year but never gets more than a couple of pounds a week. Another desires fame and dies unknown. Another desires a wife and family and dies a bachelor. Nearly all desire to reach a good old age, yet the average duration of life stands somewhere in the neighbourhood of forty years. Illustrations to the same end might be multiplied, but if our desires are not gratified in every direction is there any justification for assuming that they will be gratified in any? If the desire to reach seventy years of age is no surety that we shall not die at thirty, why should we assume that a desire to live for ever proves that death is no more than a passage from one room to another? The existence of desire may be of value as an indication to past conditions of life, or of past education, but it is of very doubtful guidance as to what will happen even in the future of this world, and of no value whatever in regard to some presumed other state of existence.

CHAPTER III.

THE APPEAL TO FACTS.

In the last chapter we were concerned with an examination of the alleged desire for a future life and an analysis of its meaning and value. The conclusion reached was that the plea owed its force entirely to the fact that men and women were in the habit of taking current phrases at their face value, without ever trying to get a clear conception of what was meant by the expressions used, or whether they had a meaning at all. In the present chapter we can carry that method of procedure a step further, and with profit. For it is tolerably certain that if people were in the habit of asking themselves, "What exactly do I mean by immortality?" it would be seen that to assert survival beyond death is to say that which is incapable of proof, and a bringing together of terms that are mutually destructive.

It is, for example, easy enough to say that twice two are five, and just as easy to say that one believes in the sum. But this is only for so long as we refrain from asking just what is meant by the statement. To assert the existence of a belief, and to have a belief are not of necessity identical propositions. And I think it can be shown that the belief in immortality is one that would stand condemned by its own weakness if we all were to ask what precisely is meant by it. That there may be truths with which we are unacquainted is likely enough, but there cannot well be truths that are in direct contradiction to what we know to be true,

and the terms of which cannot be brought together in consciousness.

Now what is it that ought to be meant when we speak of personal immortality as a fact? It will not do to say we mean that in some way or another, and in some form or another, we persist. In some form or other everything persists. That is a postulate of the most rigid determinism, and is accepted by the most uncompromising materialism. Besides, a changed form of *me* is not me at all; it is someone or something else. John Smith with a new set of bodily and mental characteristics is no more the original John Smith than a baked pudding is the same as a boiled one because the cook uses the same ingredients. To every one of us a given individual is primarily a particular set of bodily and mental peculiarities, and, therefore, his survival beyond death means the persistence of the individual as we know him. If I am not the same after death as I was before, then it is not I who persists, but someone or something else. Consequently, we may lay it down as a settled proposition that survival after death means the survival of the individual with all those physical and other peculiarities in virtue of which we know him as an individual.

Not only does the conception of immortality involve this, but the popular and emotional pleas for a future life imply it. If we do not live again as we are now the talk of meeting our loved ones beyond the grave is so much verbiage. We should not know them even if we met them. The husband who is looking forward to meeting his wife, or the parent the child, must all be expecting the same bodily form manifesting the same qualities of mind and character that they

knew and loved this side of the grave. Nothing else will do. To offer them anything different would be like expecting a mother who had lost a child to be content with a free pick from an orphan asylum. To be real the individual must exist on the other side of the grave as he existed here. That is what we ought to believe; but I think it can be shown that we can assert that we do believe this only so long as we refrain from bringing together in our minds the various terms of the proposition.

The moment we raise the issue in this clear and unambiguous way the unintelligibility of the belief begins to emerge. When we speak of man as an individual, what do we mean? Primarily, man is known to us as an organism manifesting certain qualities or discharging certain functions. That he is more than this is certainly no more than an inference, and it may be a wholly unwarrantable assumption. But it is quite certain that, if we clear from our minds the conception of man as an organism possessing certain qualities and functions, what we have left is a complete blank. Mind *may* be more than a function of the organism, but it is quite certain that we only know it as such. Nor can we think of it as otherwise. Indeed, to think of a function in the absence of an organ is a sheer impossibility. A quality must belong to something, as wetness is a quality of something that is wet, or warmth of something that is hot. We assert that "Man survives death" much as we might repeat the formula in the Athanasian Creed about the three incomprehensibles, and we persuade ourselves that we really believe because we never ask ourselves what on earth we mean by it.

The survival of personality becomes the more unthinkable when we realize that it is, so to speak, not a constant but a variable. Personality is not something with which we start life, and which remains unchanged throughout our existence. It has none of the characteristics of immutable constancy. It is something that is slowly built up, and may be even more rapidly pulled down, and which is always undergoing a process of modification more or less drastic. Strictly speaking a man in the course of his life manifests many personalities. There is that of the child, of maturity, and of old age. Which personality is it that survives death and which are we to meet again on the other side of the grave? And why should one survive rather than another? And if all do not survive, why should any? What better claim for survival has one of the personalities over the others? If it is because it is the last that one of them survives, then it would seem that if we want the next world to be peopled by young and healthy people it would be well to return to the practice of some savages and kill our people before they get old and sick. And if it be that only one of these personalities survives, then the destruction of personality is a fact, and all the arguments against it break down.

There are many other reasons that are equally decisive against the survival of personality, but for the moment I am testing this idea from the point of view of intelligibility and trying to show that it really belongs to the by no means small class that owe their strength to the fact that men repeat strings of words and mistake them for definite ideas. It is like those formulæ of magic that had so great a vogue in the

Middle Ages and which owed their power to the fact that no one knew what they meant.

I shall have to return to this subject of personality later, when discussing the subject of Spiritualism and the nature of the " Self." It is only necessary to say here that the sense of " self " presents no mystery and no hopeless problem to the informed mind. We can, if we will, see both the creation and the destruction of the " self." What sense of " self " has a newly born child? So far as we can see, none at all. Even the knowledge of its having a body appears to be in the nature of a discovery. The sense of touch—the mother-sense—is probably the starting point here, and with growth the notion of a physical self is gradually elaborated. On the mental side there is a corresponding development. Experience of mother, home, playmates, the larger experience of the social world, all contribute to the building up of a distinct personality. The self, the ego, is not something that is simple and indecomposable, it is something that is complex, multiple, and decomposable. And this building up of experiences which on the psychological side gives us the sense of personality, has its analogue on the biological side. For the life of the organism is also multiple. It is built up from the myriads of cells and their lives which go to make up the life of the entire organism. In a rough and ready way we may say that the cell is to the individual as the individual is to the nation. Individual and nation represent the total of the constituent parts, plus what is given by the fact of their combination. But eliminate the individuals and what becomes of the nation? Destroy the life of the cells and what becomes of their product, the

individual life? Is it not quite as rational to talk of national life persisting in the absence of individuals as it is to think of human life persisting after the cells which comprise the organism have been destroyed.

There is one other point that is worth noting in this connection. We know that each human being commences his or her existence as a consequence of the union of two minute particles of living matter. At what point of this union are we to conceive the beginning of an immortal soul? If at the moment of junction, then we must assume that the soul is a product of the union. If not then, at what subsequent stage are we to assume its beginnings? The difficulty does not end here. We know that man is only one figure in a lengthy sum of animal existence. And where in that immense chain are we to draw the line? If man is immortal why not the animals that are near him in the scale? And if these are immortal, what is to prevent us going lower still, carry it down to the very simplest form of animated existence and claim immortality for the amœba? But that is not all. Weismann pointed out that the single celled organisms do really possess a physical immortality. Short of an accident they do not die. They simply divide into two distinct organisms each of which goes through the same process. And if we assume that the single celled organism possessed a single soul, so soon as it splits up into two, are there two "souls" existing where before there was only one? If so, we can by this method multiply soul as a consequence of simple division. As some one has suggested, we can increase the number of immortal souls by cutting up a jelly-fish.

The more closely we analyse this conception of

survival beyond death the more unintelligible it becomes. The individual is, as we have said, the sum of his organic activities, and it is not denied that these activities are absolutely dependent upon specific organic structures. Thus, we all admit that vision is dependent upon the structure of the eye, hearing upon the existence of auditory organs, and the same principle holds of every function and sense, including the great mother sense of feeling. It will not be denied that if the eye is destroyed the capacity for vision goes, or if certain nerve centres are destroyed that the sense of touch is destroyed. We may, that is, destroy one sense after another; and yet, we are asked to believe that if instead of destroying the individual in this piecemeal fashion we blast him out of existence with a charge of melinite or some other explosive he will exist somewhere else with all his faculties unimpaired. Nay, better than unimpaired, for the fact of his being without organs for the manifestations of functions will in some quite non-understandable manner make those functions stronger and more perfect than ever. Anything more absurd it would be impossible to conceive.

I do not think, then, that one is putting the case too strongly in saying that the belief in immortality owes its currency to the fact that either people do not realize the unintelligible character of the proposition laid down, or they lack the knowledge that would make it unintelligible. To make my meaning clear I may take an illustration from the law of gravitation. So long as one thinks of gravitation as a force that merely pulls downwards, the proposition that the same force which holds people on the earth here must be pushing them off the earth at the Antipodes is rational. But when

we realize that the proper conception of gravitation is that of a force pulling toward a centre, the proposition becomes at once unthinkable. So with the matter now before us. The conception of survival beyond death we know to have been born at a time when man was quite unacquainted with the nature of the organism and of its functions. At that time the conception of something inhabiting the body and forsaking it at death to take up its abode elsewhere was quite an intelligible one. But what is intelligible at one stage of culture becomes unintelligible at another stage. And when in the light of the knowledge of to-day we bear in mind all that is implied in this conception of life after death, we find that we are faced with nothing more than a series of mutually destructive propositions. We cannot think of the organism existing in another world without assuming that the same conditions that exist here exist there, and then must dismiss from our minds the knowledge that the disintegration of the physical body is absolutely complete. We cannot think of the functions of an organism existing in the absence of the organism because that outrages all that we know of fact. And we cannot think of the survival of personality, as a psychological fact, once we realize the nature of personality, with all its permutations, cancellations, buildings, and rebuildings. At every point the conception of survival beyond death receives a check from the knowledge that we actually possess. It can be retained only on the condition that we narcotize ourselves with words and close our minds to some of the most easily ascertained facts of scientific investigation.

CHAPTER IV.

SOUL OR MIND?

WHAT are the facts, or the alleged facts, upon which, to the modern mind, the theory of survival is supposed to rest? This is an all-important question, and its discussion in connection with most questions would exhaust the subject. But the difficulty here is that the real reasons and the alleged ones do not coincide. The alleged foundations of the belief in immortality have no basis in fact, the real ones are such that no civilized intelligence would tolerate them for a moment. And of even the avowed reasons it may be said that they owe their force to the persistence below consciousness of forms of thought that are disowned the moment they appear above the surface. It is for this reason that the informed critic—one who never loses sight of the origin and history of the belief—can never quite get rid of a feeling of unreality about the whole performance. He is never in open contact with the real grounds of the belief, and yet he knows all the time that it is these suppressed grounds which give the conviction whatever vitality it has. The expressed reasons given for the belief are no more than excuses for its retention. They carry as much conviction as does the politician thirsting for power orating eloquently on his devotion to the welfare of the country, but with his mind bent on personal or party

advancement. Religion is a veritable playground of ghosts, and when it is not a ghost raised to the rank of a god it is the ghost of a superstition endowed with the dignity of a logical proposition.

What is the basic assumption made by believers in man's survival beyond death? Bishop Butler, living at a time when the scientific case against immortality was far less complete than it is to-day, put the issue plainly when he said that every argument for the immortality of man proceeded on the assumption that the mind was independent of the body. And this perfectly plain statement receives endorsement in a statement made by Dr. W. Brown in a recent course of lectures delivered on behalf of the doctrine we are combating.[1] Both give a plain statement of the fundamental issue, for with every belief in survival there is the necessary assumption that man is a duality. There is the body and there is something else—soul, spirit, mind—and it is this something else that is the real person. It uses the body for a certain period and at death dispenses with it. So far the statement of the case is quite clear. But scientific knowledge has grown greatly since Butler's day, and one consequence of this has been to drive believers into more obscure and more roundabout statements of their primary conviction. It is, at all events, quite certain that nothing worthy of being called proof has been brought forward. A century and a half of intense scientific activity has entirely failed to discover a single fact or to give the

[1] "If we believe that the mind comes to an end when the body ceases to exist, then the question of immortality is settled—there can be no immortality." (King's College Lectures on *Immortality*, p. 126.)

least scrap of positive evidence in favour of the dualistic theory. There are a host of assumptions, a number of ingenious theories, many forced and uncorroborated explanations of obscure mental phenomena, but no more. The theory of a future life remains now as ever, a vague hope, an unprovable speculation, a useless hypothesis. It explains nothing, and it introduces a number of new and gratuitous difficulties.

It is not alone that there are no reliable facts which can be offered in defence of the belief of the mind's independence of the body. Such facts as we have in our possession and to which we can make the most confident appeal are dead against such an assumption. It may safely be said that of mind as an independent force no one has either knowledge or conception. If one tries to think of mind, not as being associated with some organic structure, but as being apart from it, he will soon realize that he has set himself an impossible task. The dependence of mind on body is clear. It is affected by bodily states, by changes in temperature, by the food we eat, by the air we breathe, by the efficiency of the secretory organs. Mind, as associated with a nervous structure, we can conceive; mind, as distinct from it, we cannot think of at all. The formula " No psychosis without neurosis " is accepted as a working maxim in all science, and is only putting into technical language the common experience of all. In the phenomena which is presented to us in cases of insanity, in the study of the brain in health and disease, in noting the effects of drugs on the mental functions, in our knowledge that there is a relation, not exactly determined, but still a relation, between brain

weight and brain structure and the manifestations of intelligence, we have all the conditions that inevitably suggest a relation of cause and effect. And in no direction but in this one would that inference be for a moment challenged.

Science is therefore telling us nothing new or strange when it says that mental phenomena depend upon the brain and the nervous system. It is only saying what we all know, and stating an assumption upon which we all act. For no educated person acts as though he really believes the mind to be independent of the body. And there is not a medical man in the kingdom who ever treats mental ailments from any other standpoint than that of the deranged functions of a definite nervous structure. In health and disease the connection between mind and body is of the closest, and, so far as can be seen, is of an inseparable character.

The piling up of authorities is a poor enough game, but if one were inclined to indulge in it at length one might compile a volume of opinions of leading authorities in support of what has just been said. I will content myself with two or three. Thus we have Dr. Mellone—a believer in immortality—admitting that "Modern psychology has nothing to contribute in favour of the belief in survival.....Psychology has effectually disposed of the conception of the soul and body as two separable things" (*The Immortal Hope*, p. 47).

Professor Münsterberg says:—

> The philosopher who bases the hope of immortality on a theory of brain functions.....seems to me on the same ground with the astronomer who seeks with his

> telescope for a place in the universe where no space exists, and where there would thus be undisturbed room for God and the eternal bodiless souls (*Psychology and Life*, p. 91).

The great Dr. Osler, in the course of a lecture on "Science and Immortality" says, "Modern psychological science dispenses altogether with the theory of the soul," and, finally, Professor William James, in the act of saying all that may be said on behalf of the belief in survival, adds:—

> It is indeed true that physiological science has come to the conclusion cited (that our conscious life is a function of cerebral convolutions) and we must confess that in so doing she has only carried out a little further the common belief of mankind. Every one knows that arrests of brain development occasion imbecility, that blows on the head abolish memory or consciousness, and that brain stimulants and poisons change the quality of our ideas. The anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists have only shown this generally admitted fact of a dependence to be detailed and minute. What the laboratories and hospitals have lately been teaching us is not only that thought in general is one of the brain's functions, but that the various special portions of thinking are functions of special portions of the brain. When we are thinking of things seen it is our occipital convolutions that are active; when of things heard it is a certain portion of our temporal lobes; when of things to be spoken, it is one of our frontal convolutions.....Such special opinions may have to be corrected; yet, so firmly established do the main positions worked out by the anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists of the brain appear, that the youth

> of our medical schools are everywhere taught unhesitatingly to believe them. The assurance that observation will go to establish them even more minutely is the inspirer of all contemporary research (*Human Immortality*, pp. 19-22).

Professor James might have added, quite in line with his own favourite philosophy, that no other theory works, and this one does. The theory of the independence of the mind explains nothing, and using the word "soul" as an explanatory term is a mere verbal trick. It belongs to that sort of philosophizing whose great merit is, to use the words of Shadworth Hodgson, "Whatever you are totally ignorant of assert to be the explanation of everything else."

Against the theory that mind stands to structure in the relation of function to organ, it is urged that we know of no means by which neural action can become transformed into thought. The two things, it is said, are incommensurable; they belong to two different orders of existence, and by no known means can we see how one can give rise to the other. This is not the best way of stating the issue, but, if it were, the objection would still be inconclusive. It assumes that our present alleged ignorance of the connection must remain permanent. It is also making our want of knowledge the measure of possibility. And that is always a dangerous policy to adopt. The frontiers of human knowledge are always extending, and problems that appear hopeless to one generation are apt to figure as settled questions in the text-books of a later one.

There are, in this connection, only three conceivable hypotheses on which we can work. We may assume that neural action is the cause of thought, or

that thought is the cause of neural action, or that the two are so related that a particular kind of neural motion is always accompanied by mental phenomena without the two being causally connected. The last hypothesis once enjoyed a certain popularity, but it is now so generally discarded that it may safely be dismissed, and we are thus left to deal with the first two.

And first, by way of preliminary, it may be noted that whatever difficulty there is in accepting mind as a function of neural activity holds with equal strength against the theory championed by the believer in survival. If we are warranted in rejecting the functional theory of mind because we cannot see the connection between brain action and thought, we are clearly prohibited from accepting mind as the cause of brain action, and for the same reason. If, as we have been so often assured, there is really an "unfathomable abyss," a "bridgeless gulf" between the two, the gulf remains whether we are standing on this side or on that. You cannot walk across a bridgeless gulf by the easy expedient of attempting the passage from the other side. You cannot in reason reject a causal connection between matter and mind on the ground of their belonging to different categories, and then turn round and affirm it between mind and matter. To deny a connection for the purpose of refuting materialism and then to affirm it for the purpose of establishing spiritualism is nonsense. If there really is a gap between the facts, and not in our knowledge of them, the gap remains from whichever side we approach. And thus the very nature of the criticism which is directed against the Materialist effectually disposes of the Spiritualist. The latter cuts down a bridge with

elaborate ostentation, and then professes ability to walk across the chasm as though the bridge still remained in position.

What is really at issue in this question of the connection of mind and structure is the precise meaning which we attach, or ought to attach, to " function." When we say that A is a function of B what is it that we ought to mean? It will be well to take a simple illustration by way of answer. The prime function of a muscle is contractility under stimuli. It is this function that is manifested when the hand grasps an object. But the constituent parts of a muscle are cells and cell fibres, and if the cells are examined separately all they exhibit is the normal irritability of cells in general. It is their combination and organization that gives us the phenomenon of contraction. We cannot have muscular action in the absence of cells, but it is the peculiar combination of specially developed cells that gives specific muscular phenomena.

So far, the position is quite clear. Now if we try to separate the " function " from the structure of which it is the expression we soon find that we are attempting an impossibility. The two things are inseparable, and the absence of one involves the absence of the other. Or, if we advance to a more subjective view and ask why certain movements should result in the flexing of a muscle, the only answer is that the one accompanies the other. And if it were possible to push the investigation back a stage and to show how muscular action arises from certain properties of the cell, we should have added nothing material to the discussion. Ultimately, we only know the qualities or properties of a thing by observing what it does. And we express

the result of our observations when we say that A is a function of B. The function of a thing is what it does. If we keep that consideration clearly before us much of the confusion that surrounds the subject will soon disappear.

Biologically, then, a function is actually the activity of an organ or of a group of organs. Whether we are dealing with muscle and contractility, with brain and thought, or organism and life, does not in the least matter. We have the structure and we have its activities, that is, its functions. And so far as one can see, certainly for aught that anyone *knows* to the contrary, life and thought are functions of a certain specialized organization. To say that they are more than this is, in the present state of knowledge, pure assumption, and those who make the assumption are logically bound to justify it. It will not do for them to make the statement and then defy others to prove that it is false. To tell us that no trace of life can be found in the bases of organic structures, and no trace of mind in certain organs, is only to add an absurdity to an empty assertion. Certainly, if one reduces an organ to its parts, or an organism to its organs, one will never find there the properties that were manifested in their combination. For the function is not the expression of the physical and chemical properties of the tissues merely, it is that plus the powers of combination and organization. Except, therefore, for the added complexity there is no greater difficulty, in kind, of seeing how life and thought are the consequences of given organic structures, than there is of seeing how any function is related to its structure. In every case all that we need show is that, given a

particular organ or set of organs a result or results follow. There is no question in science of "why," but only of "how." And that is answered when we have shown all the conditions under which a phenomenon constantly occurs. This is not questioned in most matters. No one doubts that digestion, circulation, etc., are functions of the bodily organism. And there would be no question here were it not thought necessary to find some basis in modern knowledge—or should not one say in modern ignorance?—for the belief in a soul. As usual the religionist is building on our existing ignorance, with an inward prayer that it may never be removed.

It will be seen that much of the confusion attendant upon a discussion of the subject is due to raising the question in the wrong way. People look for the undiscoverable and then complain they cannot find it. In asking "How does neural action become *transformed* into sensation?" or "How does the brain *produce* thought?" we are stating the issue wrongly, and so paving the way for further confusion. Two things are separated in thought that are inseparable in fact, and are then treated as distinct existences. If used with the necessary qualifications the separation is both permissible and useful, but to lose sight of these qualifications is fatal to exact thinking. For the only sense in which the once famous "the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile" is true is that as in the absence of the liver there is no bile, so in the absence of the brain there is no thought. But production suggests separation, and it is here that the confusion commences. It is said, for example, that neural action and thought cannot stand together as

cause and effect because one can trace the complete circuit of a given series from the excitation of a peripheral nerve on to the discharge that occurs in the brain cells, and then follow a corresponding return series ending in action. These are complete in themselves, and how can we assert mind or consciousness to be a link in the series when we see that the series is complete in its absence? Yet mind is there. On that point there is no dispute. But how is it possible to connect the two things if there is no point at which the connection can be made?

If we are really looking at two sets of separable facts, the one physical and the other mental, the case of the vitalist seems unanswerable. But is that really the case? Are we not, in allowing the vitalist to raise the issue in this way, allowing him to assume in the beginning all that he wants in the end? But suppose that instead of using language which implies the existence of two distinct things, we regard the bodily and the mental phases as two sides of the same thing. We shall then be describing all that we are certain occurs, we simplify the whole matter, and we are able to see our way more clearly. All the confusing talk as to the brain producing thought disappears and we are left with what is really the essential problem, that of determining the conditions under which a particular phenomenon occurs.

The cardinal fact here is that we are dealing with a phenomenon which may be adequately described from either of two standpoints. What under one set of conditions may be viewed as brain action or molecular motion may be viewed under other conditions as thought, and whether we describe what occurs in one

set of terms or the other entirely depends upon ourselves. Thus, an aerial wave striking the retina may be described in terms of a series of nervous shocks or in terms of colour. In the one case we have a problem in psychology, in the other in physics. But the two descriptions do not, obviously, refer to two different things, but to the same thing described from an objective or from a subjective point of view. We have the same thing illustrated in the fact that a series of vibratory shocks may be described in terms of heat, sound, or light. There is a reality of difference without there being a differentiation of existence. It is true that we cannot see why motion should produce thought, but it is equally true that we cannot see why thought should produce motion. And that is because we are all the time looking for the impossible. But we can see that the same thing under different conditions may present different aspects. The psychic fact is not merely the equivalent of the physical one, it is the same fact viewed now objectively and now subjectively. Our mistake lies in first separating in thought two things that are not separate in fact, and then forgetting that the distinction is one that we have made purely for our own convenience.

Here, as in so many other cases, confused language, if not the product of confused thinking, sooner or later leads to it. Owing to the way the question is phrased the real issue never stands clearly before the mind. And in this particular instance we have the added confusion which results from the persistence of primitive conceptions of the nature of man. With the origin of the belief we will deal later, at present it is enough to say that there is not the slightest doubt to-day of the

way in which this belief in the duality of man began. And in the development of a more scientific mode of thinking there has been, not merely the fight of an established opinion to perpetuate itself, but the important fact that while our best thinking reaches out beyond the present, the language in which we seek to express ideas was coined for the expression of thoughts of a wholly different variety. We say one thing, we mean one thing, but the implications of our language are often vastly different. In many ways we use the language of savagery to express the findings of science, and in his resistance to new ideas this gives the savage in us a tremendous advantage.

It is for this reason, principally, that I have dwelt upon the importance of stating the question at issue in a way that should be as free as possible from ambiguity. "What do I mean?" is always a question of importance, and "What ought I to mean?" is hardly less so. And in this instance we certainly ought not to set out with such questions as "How does the brain produce thought?" or "How are life and organization united?" That is simply allowing one's opponent so to state the case that he has gone a long way towards securing victory before the battle begins. That life is never found apart from organization or thought apart from brain are facts. And it is not our duty to show the Spiritualist how they are united. It is his to show how they can be separated. We do not know them as separate things. We cannot even think them as separate things. It is for those who say they can be separated to prove it. It is enough for us to take our stand upon observed facts, and to be guided by the inferences they suggest.

Finally, we may note as one of the curiosities of the religious mind that while quite readily accepting theories in support of religion that have not the slightest evidence in their favour, it demands the most complete and the most absolute demonstration of the truth of any theory that may be offered on the opposite side. The demand just dealt with is a case in point. The theory of an animating soul that is independent of the body is accepted without the slightest evidence being given in its favour. The most absolute proof is demanded before the functional theory of mind is adopted. The Materialist is really not bound to show *how* nervous action gives rise to mental phenomena before he is warranted in taking that as a working hypothesis. It is enough for him that the known facts do not contradict such an assumption. The theory of the Materialist explains much and contradicts nothing. The theory of the soul explains nothing and contradicts much. It is an absurdity invoked to explain a difficulty, and it proceeds to make the difficulty more than ever difficult of solution by creating a cloud of words behind which the believer in survival seeks to perpetuate a belief that owes its origin to the fear and ignorance of the primitive savage.

CHAPTER V.

PROFESSOR JAMES TO THE RESCUE.

In dealing with the relations of mind and body I specially left on one side a theory that has appeared many times during the history of the belief in survival, which still finds many advocates, and was put forward in the name of speculative science by the late Professor William James. In his Ingersoll lecture on "Human Immortality" he replies to the statement that we only know thought as a function of the brain by admitting the fact, but attempts to draw "the fangs of cerebralistic materialism," by offering a different explanation. Function, he says, may be of more than one kind. It may be liberative, as when a spring releases the thing it holds down, or productive, as when it represents the properties of things in combination, or, yet again, it may be transmissive, as when a piece of coloured glass determines the hue of the light that reaches the eye. If the Materialist is right in assuming the function of the brain to be productive, then the belief in survival has no logical weight. But if its function is permissive then we may accept the position that thought is a function of the brain without surrendering our faith in survival.

For, he says, "suppose.....that the whole universe of material things.....should turn out to be a mere surface veil of phenomena hiding and keeping back

the world of genuine realities.....the whole world of natural experience, as we get it, being but a time mask, shattering or refracting the one infinite thought which is the sole reality into those millions of finite streams of consciousness known to us as our private selves," assume all this and admit that our brains are the organs which transmit this reality to our consciousness, then it follows that the destruction of the organism does not affect the existence of this sole reality, it merely destroys its organ of transmission.

It may be granted that one can prove anything provided one also assumes all that is required to effect the proof. And in this case the assumptions of Professor James are sufficiently comprehensive. For, first, we must assume that there is a world of consciousness " behind the veil." Then we must assume that the brain stands in the same relation to this real world as a stained glass window does to the world of light, and that just as the light is individualized as green or red or blue by the glass through which it passes, so the world-soul is individualized by the human organism. Finally, we must assume that the destruction of the individual organism does not at all affect the individualized consciousness, which is equal to assuming that the coloured light which streams on the cathedral floor would continue *after* the window had been broken. If we assume all these things then we can believe that after death consciousness " might in ways unknown to us continue still." With that we can all agree. Assume enough and you can prove anything. Anyone can get the omelette out of the hat—provided he has been careful to place it there before the performance commenced.

There is no need here to examine minutely the different meanings which Professor James gives to the word " function." It is plain that the only reason for elaborating them is the need for finding some sort of a basis for a " world-soul," just as the only reason for assuming a " world-soul " is the need for finding some basis for the belief in survival. For if we ask what are the facts upon which the belief in a world-soul is based, the reply is that there are none. Its sole justification is that if we accept it we can go on believing in the survival of the individual soul, a belief that is everywhere discredited. And, again, we have to note the curious fact that while demanding the most exact demonstration of the neurological theory of mental phenomena, the believer in survival is ready to accept without proof and without question so fantastic a conception as that of a " world-soul." A sea of consciousness " behind the veil," divorced from all the known conditions under which consciousness exists, is a species of rubbish better fitted to the columns of a Sunday newspaper than to the pages of a serious philosophical essay.

But suppose we were to grant this theory of a world-soul. Even then we should be as far off as ever from proving survival, or from making it even intelligible. Survival after death means—it is evidently necessary to emphasize the point—the survival of *individual* consciousness and personality. But how can that happen if all that is *me* owes its *me*ness to the fact that my brain has individualized a certain portion of the world-soul? This bit of the world-soul can only continue to be me so long as the brain remains to give it an individualistic consistency. Destroy the brain and

the individualized portion of the world-soul known as me is once more merged in the " infinite Thought "—whatever that may happen to be. As well talk of the individuality of the raindrop being preserved after it returns to the sea from which it originated. One might as reasonably talk of my body continuing to exist because after death its constituents assume a hundred and one different forms. It is not a question here of whether man is essentially mind or essentially matter. The only point is that if he survives death he must survive as an individual, not as an undifferentiated part of some speculative whole. Those who throw themselves into ecstacies over the reunion of friends in the next world cannot have in mind the reunion of certain unorganized quantities of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus, sodium, etc. It is not the immortality of chemical elements they have in mind, but a perpetuation of individualities. And on that rock Professor James's theory is wrecked hopelessly. For whether the human individuality is the expression of the physical structure, or whether a portion of some world-soul is individualized by the physical structure, it is the animal organism that is the condition of individualization, and with the destruction of the individualizing medium individuality disappears. On either theory it is the body that determines individuality just as the stained glass determines the colour of the rays that fall upon the ground. As the glass individualizes the light, so does the body individualize the world-soul. And as the breaking of the glass puts an end to the coloured rays, so the death of the organism puts an end to personal immortality. We destroy the possibility of survival

as surely on the hypothesis of Professor James as on that of the most rigid materialism.

It is, of course, easy to put forward difficulties and point out that the neurological theory of mind cannot answer every question that is asked. If it could, that would imply that our knowledge was complete, and that one chapter of science was definitely closed beyond the possibility of any enlargement or revision. It is enough if a theory explains the facts so far as it goes and if it does not contradict any known facts. And, at least, this theory covers and explains the facts as no other theory does. Other methods have been tried and found wanting, not because those who tried them were wanting in ability, but simply because of the methods themselves. And it is not without significance that Professor McDougall, in the opening of a work written to champion the existence of a "soul," says of the present attitude of scientific workers: —

> It is a matter of common knowledge that science has given its verdict against the soul, has declared that the soul, as a thing, or being, or substance, or mode of existence, or activity, different from, distinguishable from, or in any sense or degree independent of the body is a mere survival from primitive culture, one of the many relics of savage superstition, that obstinately persist among us in defiance of the clear teachings of modern science. The greater part of the philosophic world also, mainly owing to the influence of the natural sciences, has arrived at the same conclusion. In short, it cannot be denied that, as William James told us at Oxford three years ago, "souls are out of fashion."

And if a thing so widely advertised as the soul is going out of fashion, the reasons for its disuse must, indeed, be strong.

At any rate, the truth of the statement is undeniable. One might offer the whole of the science of psychology in evidence. What the Greeks meant by psychology was plain. It was a discourse about the soul. And for many generations it continued to mean that. People wrote elaborate treatises about the soul, and the less they knew about it the more voluminous their writings. Indeed, there is no limit to the number of books that might be written concerning a subject on which nothing is known. In that case one can begin anywhere, and even though it carries with it the disadvantage of ending nowhere, the method allows free scope for that verbal ambiguity which delights the soul of the average theologian. But in the seventeenth century a change set in. Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke between them marked out a saner and a more profitable method of investigation than had hitherto existed. Since the time of these heretics the tendency has been ever growing in the direction of a thoroughly deterministic psychology, a system in which the supernatural should have no place. And to-day one may safely say that there is not a scientific man of repute in the world, no matter what his expressed religious opinions may be, who, when dealing with mental phenomena, does not treat them as the equivalents of neural processes. And so it has come about that while we still retain the name of psychology, we mean by it something quite different from the meaning given to the term by those who first used it. A modern text-book of psychology simply leaves the

soul out of account. It has no use for it as a substantive fact, and it can do without it even as a name. We have to-day almost universally accepted a psychology without a soul. And the meaning of this is that investigators find it possible to deal with the whole world of mental phenomena without the least reference to it. The revolution is complete for all, save those who are bent, like the devotees of an exiled king, on doing homage to the shade of a deposed monarch ruling over a non-existent territory.

CHAPTER VI.

THE APPEAL TO MORALITY.

To one whose mind is not befogged with theology man's moral sense is the product of intercourse with his environment. And as a consequence it follows that if one wishes to understand the nature of the moral sense one must study the world, social and material, that has produced it. That is a common-sense method, but it will not do for the theologian. It allows little room for mental fog and fantastic speculation, and it has—to the theologian—the sad merit of promoting clear thinking and exact expression. The consequence is that in nearly all writings in favour of survival we have the logical and the natural order reversed. Instead of considering the moral sense in the light of its history and of the world to which it is related, the moral sense is exalted to the rank of an independent judge, and the universe threatened with severe penalties if it fails to come up to expectations. And so far as our special subject is concerned, the general position taken up is that as the world we know does not come up to man's ethical expectations there must be another world, which at present we do not know, where our moral sense will receive the most complete satisfaction.

That is putting the case very plainly, which is, I admit, a very cruel form in which to put a religious

claim, and it is ridiculous, which is inevitable as it is a part of theology. The unillumined intellect can see no reason why the universe must live up to our expectations in the matter of morals any more than it does in the matter of weather. Whether it does so in the one case or in the other is wholly a matter of observation. And one may hazard the observation that whatever be the finding the universe will survive our disapproval, even as it appears to be quite unaffected by our praise. In any case the argument coming from a believer in God is curious and proves the truth of the Johnsonian observation that while "two contradictory statements cannot be true, they may both inhere in the same mind." For, it will be noted, that when the Freethinker questions the existence of God, one reply of the Theist is to point to the wonderful and admirable manner in which this world is constructed. It is then the best of all possible worlds. When it is a question of a future life this world becomes almost as bad as it can be, and is so full of imperfections there must be another one so that the blunders and imperfections of this one may be corrected. The world is perfect or imperfect as the argument is for the existence of a God or for a future state. Even in his unreason the believer is seldom logical for long.

In this connection we may briefly examine an expression that is made to do duty in very many modern writings in defence of theology. In the preface to his *Immortal Hope* Mr. Mellone says: —

> The universe which has produced us is rational, and therefore has not endowed life with the highest

> possibilities simply in order that they may perish; that the apparent indications of the annihilation of personality at death, which are supposed to be warranted by some of the facts of experience, or by some of conclusions of nineteenth century science, are only apparent, and break down one by one upon examination.

The universe is "rational," and therefore will not disappoint our expectation of survival. That is the kernel of the argument, put before us by different writers under various forms. And the expression "a rational universe" might be useful, as well as popular, if those who use it would condescend to explain what they mean. Thus, when we speak of man as a rational being there is no confusion involved. We mean that he is a being who is able to reflect consciously upon his experiences, weigh them, and pronounce judgment. But it is obvious that we cannot speak of the universe as being orderly in this sense. That the universe possesses intelligence—apart from the fact that animal intelligence is in the universe—is a wild assumption, and without the slightest spark of evidence. And it is certain that so long as we use the term "intelligence" in an intelligible manner we cannot even think of it existing apart from some form of animal organization.

Is a "rational universe" intended to convey the idea that man can give a rational or coherent account of the succession of natural phenomena? This, I think, is what is usually intended, and if that were always the case there would be no dispute. But that would not help the believer in survival very much. There must be a further implication to be of use, and

this is that because man can give a rational account of natural phenomena these must have been arranged by some rational intelligence, and the expectations to which they give rise are a part of the intended consequences. But this by no means follows. A man may give a rational account of a heap of stones, but it by no means follows that it is therefore a " rational " heap. And the same is true of the universe. For if we take away the heap of stones and substitute the universe, there is no greater warranty for calling matter dispersed through space " rational " than there is for calling a heap of stones rational when collected on a given spot of land. In either case the rationality is not in the objects described but in the person describing.

What is probably at the back of this much used and greatly abused expression is the fact that the phenomena of nature admit of orderly grouping, and which by a figure of speech we call an intelligent grouping But even that grouping is a product of our organization. Our knowledge of the universe is strictly and ultimately conditioned by our sense organs, and there is a necessarily selective quality in our cognition of the universe. The universe is to us what it is because our sense organs are what they are. Natural order is thus, strictly, no more than a registration of sequences *as they affect animal organization*. What natural phenomena are like apart from animal organization we have no means whatever of knowing, and anything said on that head is pure assumption. To call the universe " rational " is, then, saying only that we are able to give a coherent account of our sensible experience. In this sense the phrase is admissible.

But it is indefensible when used to express the idea that the universe possesses rationality apart from animal organization.

From another point of view we have the same fallacy illustrated in the following from Mr. Schiller's *Humanism*. The ethical postulate for immortality consists, he says, in—

> showing that without immortality it is not possible to think of the world as a harmonious whole, as a moral cosmos. To show this, one has not to appeal to anything more recondite than the fact that in our present state of existence the moral life cannot be lived out to its completion, that it is not permitted to display its full fruitage of consequences for good and for evil.....unless therefore we can vindicate this order by explaining away the facts that would otherwise destroy it, we have to abandon the ethical judgment of the world of our experience as good or bad; we have to admit that the ideal of goodness is an illusion of which the scheme of things recks not at all (p. 252).

But I quite fail to see the legitimacy of the expression "moral cosmos" as Mr. Schiller uses it. The universe is harmonious—in other words, is a universe—so long as we can group its phenomena in an orderly and intelligible manner. But it does not follow that generalizations framed to cover certain restricted groups of phenomena must be applicable to all. Biologic and chemical "laws" are, for example, framed to cover particular groups of phenomena, but neither is universally applicable. And the same thing is true of morals. Ethical judgments have nothing to

do with the universe as a whole. Moral laws are generalizations which describe the conduct of human beings living in groups. They begin and end there—or at most, with an extension to certain animal groups —and it is ridiculous to apply to one department of nature generalizations that are intended for use in another. Once upon a time the Christian asked the Freethinking critic, " Shall gravitation cease as you pass by ? " Something of the same kind might now be said to the Theist who insists on judging the universe in the light of a preconceived theory.

The argument is a pure begging of the question at issue. The universe, we are told, cannot be a coherent whole unless it satisfies the demands of our moral nature. But on what ground do we assume that the universe must honour every draft that we care to draw upon it in the name of morality ? The reason is that we have a theory which says it should. The facts are to be determined by the theory instead of the theory being determined by the facts. It is true that the evil in the world is an indictment of " cosmic justice," but only so long as we hold moral conceptions to be applicable to cosmic processes. If we are guided by the facts that difficulty simply does not exist. There is nothing to shock the moral consciousness so long as we keep before us the legitimate sphere and the meaning of moral judgments. To judge the working of the universe from the point of view of morals is as about as helpful and as intelligent as it is to consider morality from the standpoint of pure physics. It is the fact of putting a God behind or over nature that riddles the whole subject with absurdity.

Another form of the same argument is presented to

us by the late Dr. Martineau. In his elaborate and eloquent *Study of Religion* he says: —

> Were the problem surrendered to physics and metaphysics it could never quit its state of suspense; there would be nothing to forbid the future; there would be nothing to promise it; and on such a question the intellectual balance would be tantamount to practical negation. Not till we turn to the moral aspect of death do we meet with the presiding reasons which give the casting vote.

What these "presiding reasons" are we may gather from the Gifford lectures of Principal Caird: —

> The injustice or inequality seems the more flagrant when we see that it is the very goodness of the good to which their extra share of suffering, the very badness of the bad to which their immunity from suffering is often traceable. On the one hand the very sensitiveness of conscience which characterizes the former subjects them to inward pangs of self reproach, to painful moral conflicts and struggles, to bitter distress for the sorrow and sin of the world, of which the latter know nothing; and, on the other hand, against these and other causes of suffering the vicious and morally indifferent are case-hardened by their moral insensibility.

The truth of this is undeniable, and, indeed, the indictment might be put in very much stronger language. Nature does not take less care in so moulding the vicious character that its very viciousness protects it from pangs to which the better character is exposed, than it does in fashioning the better type of character

which we profess to admire. And that being so, admitting the obvious fact that the relation of conduct to consequence is not of the kind that an enlightened moral sense would approve, we may ask in what way this points to a life beyond the grave. Our complaint concerning the course of things is not concerned with some other world, but with this one. And the genuine moral demand is that things shall be different here, not that they shall be different somewhere else. And even though we grant that things are managed on a more enlightened scale in some other state of existence the evil continues here. For that is not accidental, it is part of the very structure of things. Human nature being what it is, it is quite impossible to conceive a time when the state of affairs shall be generically different from what it is now.

Why must imperfect justice here point so surely to perfect justice elsewhere? If evil triumphs here, how does that prove that elsewhere it must invariably be vanquished? The Dean of Carlisle says that "With immortality we can believe that God is love, and the world the expression of that love; without it we cannot" (*King's College Lectures on Immortality*, p. 100). There is the whole case. We must believe in a future life so that we may believe in the goodness of God. But this world is, on the religious theory, as much God's handiwork as any other. And if he could not, or would not, so arrange matters here that the adjustment of conduct to consequences should be morally justifiable, how can we assume that he can or will manage matters better elsewhere? It is suspiciously like framing a First Offender's Act for the benefit of the deity. This world is, apparently, God's

first effort. He did the best he could, but the best was very unsatisfactory. Still he benefited from experience, and elsewhere he has made another world where all the imperfections that characterize this one are avoided. That is really all the argument comes to. It is giving God Almighty an extra half-hour for repentence, another opportunity for reform. Man is far more considerate for the deity than the deity is for him.

It is argued that this kind of a world was necessary as a school for character. Man's nature needed training, or, as the older theologians put it, this life is a school of probation. But experience, training, can be of value only in a form of existence similar to this one, while on the theory propounded, the next one is to be very different. A training here can be of no value in a world that differs fundamentally from this one. No one would perpare for swimming the Channel by spending his time in bed, nor does one who contemplates undergoing a prolonged fast practice feeding on an intensified scale. An argument that proceeds on the assumption that we must adjust ourselves to things as they are in order to prepare for conditions that are radically different strikes one as the very essence of illogicality.

And when we talk of life here being a school for character what is it that we have in our minds, or have we anything in mind beyond a "rhapsody of words" ? If we all lived the same life on earth we might attach some definite conception to the expression. But that is far from being the case. The life we live is varied to an almost unbelievable degree. What, for example, is there in common between the life of a Bushman and

that of a cultured European? Very little beyond the bare facts of animal existence. But the life of thought and action which they lead is strikingly different. How, then, can we say that the life of each is a preparation or an education for some future state? If it is an educational preparation we must assume that the conditions under which a Bushman and a European will live in the next world are approximately similar to the conditions under which they live in this one. If this is not the case, then all the talk of our lives here being an educational preparation for a life elsewhere is so much verbiage. And if it is the case, then the talk of the conditions in the next world being different from those here is wildly inaccurate.

And there is the additional fact, already touched on, that experience may degrade as well as elevate, may harmonize one's nature to a suitability to evil conditions, as well as urge to an endeavour after improvement. Over indulgence in alcohol does not tend to excite a feeling against it, but rather the reverse. The vicious and the morally indifferent, as Principal Caird says, not only become immune to the pricks of conscience, but their callousness actually protects them from the annoyance and the pain to which a better type of character is exposed. The bad man does not consciously suffer from his badness, it is the good man who is distressed at the sight. In fact, in itself, experience is of no moral value whatever. It is neither moral nor immoral, but simply non-moral. What direct experience does is to teach us to avoid the immediately painful and to pursue the immediately pleasurable, but whether the painful acts in a salutary manner or not entirely depends upon the

subject. Experience may as easily harden in vice as it may strengthen in virtue. We are, in short, back to the old Theistic dilemma. Either God would not or could not have so arranged things that justice and right would always prevail this side of the grave. If he had the will, but lacked the power, why should we assume that he has more power elsewhere? If he possessed the power but lacked the will, why should we assume that he will be differently inclined in another world? If we are to be ruled by evidence, and not by blind faith, we must judge the deity by what we know of his works. And it is worse than idle, it is the very essence of stupidity, to take imperfection here as certain proof of perfection elsewhere.

CHAPTER VII.

IS THIS LIFE ENOUGH?

In the last chapter we were dealing with the argument that the moral sense of man calls for another state of existence in which its "demands" shall receive satisfaction. Closely allied to this is the plea that human nature possesses potentialities that are not exhausted here, but which have been developed with a view to another world. This argument in one form or another is very common, presentations of it are to be found in almost any book which argues for a future life, but to illustrate it I will take three writers, giving the place of honour to a lady. In an essay which appeared originally in the *Contemporary Review*, but was afterwards published in book form, Madame Caillard says:—

> Till we come to man.....each individual existence apparently ceases at death.....With man.....so far from actual conditions exhausting his individuality, they rather seem insufficient to rouse his powers or exhibit its full scope. His conscious demand for himself and his fellows is more time, fewer physical disabilities and mental limitations, a wider sphere, a fuller experience, a wider life.....The body of a bird or of any animal does not strike us as limiting its individuality—rather expressing it in the most appropriate manner.....the individuality of many a human being, on the contrary, seems to be fighting

its way to expression through bodily hindrances, rather than clothing itself in a suitable and controllable manner.

The Rev. Dr. Mellone says:—

> Animals, so far as we can see, are able to reach in this world the highest kind of existence possible to them; that they are able to do the best which it is possible for them to do and to feel.....It is possible for the animal to live a complete animal life in this world; full satisfaction is given to its powers and possibilities, if we take into account its relation to its fellow creatures and to its offspring. But it is not possible for man to live a complete human life in this world. Human reason shows no sign of ever stopping in its development, while it seems as if the reason of animals has already stopped. Anyone who thought of denying this would have to meet a difficult question; taking animals as we know them now, could an animal ever be trained by any kind of experience or changes in its environment and its bodily organism to feel and to think as Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, or St. Paul felt and thought (*The Immortal Hope*, pp. 33-4).

Finally, we have Dr. Martineau advising us that the constitution of the human mind is not what we should expect—

> if it were constructed for a lease of a single life like ours.....When.....you place side by side the needs of human life, taken on the most liberal estimate, and the scope of the intellectual powers of man, I shall be surprised if you do not find the latter to be an enormous over-provision for the former.....there is clear evidence of their being adequate to indefinitely

more than the present term of life allows them to accomplish (*Study of Religion*, II., 2nd ed., pp. 347-8, 355-6).

These three deliverances have so much in common that they may well be taken together.

To commence with Madame Caillard. There is something decidedly ingenuous about the lady's confident belief that the body of an animal fully expresses its individuality, and in the most appropriate manner. Could an animal put its thoughts into words, it might as confidently say the same of man. Really, all that her statement amounts to is that she can see no necessity for the immortality of animals, and, quite, seriously, I can see neither necessity nor profit in the perpetual existence of a large number of human beings. The universe is not sensibly the better for their emergence, and it is difficult to conceive it as being the worse for their disappearance. As a specimen of pious egotism the opinion leaves nothing to be desired; as a sample of logical reasoning it is deplorably weak.

To say that a man is capable of doing more than he actually does while an animal is not capable of more than it achieves enshrines a very common but a very deplorable fallacy. Unless we affirm that something has become nothing or that nothing can become something, both man and animal do all they can at any given moment. Of course, by varying the conditions we may get a different result; that is, we can conceive either the man or the animal being influenced by different feelings, or being placed in different conditions, which will lead to different action, and no one was ever stupid enough to deny that possibility. But

with all animal life, including man, it remains true that while under the existing conditions what is done is the product of all the forces bearing upon the organism, it is also true that any variation in the conditions will produce a different result. What does differ between man and other animals is the degree of educability. It is in this direction that man has a real superiority over the rest of the animal world. But that is a question of degree only. In fact, taking Madame Caillard's philosophy as a whole it is strongly reminiscient of the old lady's opinion that Adam would have had an easy job naming some of the animals as anyone would know that a pig was a pig the moment he saw it.

Dr. Mellone does not effect any substantial improvement on Madame Caillard. How does he know that animals reach the highest kind of existence possible to them? Animals are certainly more or less educable physically and otherwise. Both the possibility of training and of evolution proves this. Animals do grow in intelligence, and while it may be admitted that the limits of growth are more sharply defined than is the case with man, the fact of growth remains. And when we are asked whether we can conceive an animal ever thinking as Shakespeare or Newton thought, the answer is, of course, No. But I can conceive of some animals reaching a higher degree of mental development than is common to the rest of their species, and that is the real point in question. And, question for question, can we, taking men as they are, think of them all becoming Newtons and Shakespeares? And if not, what is the value of the comparison? Some animals progress more than others, and some men pro-

gress more than others. That appears to be the whole of the matter, unless Dr. Mellone means that we ought to see a horse behave as does a man before we can credit it with the capacity for education or development. The fact is that Dr. Mellone is, unconsciously, playing fast and loose with the conception of man considered as an individual, and the conception of progress as a racial fact. It is with the former only that the idea of immortality is concerned. And so far as that is concerned the argument breaks down on the fact that the individual does not progress indefinitely. It is the race that is capable of indefinite progress, and to that progress no one can place a limit. This point will be more fitly dealt with in considering the argument of Dr. Martineau.

The essential weakness of Dr. Martineau's plea that the capacities of man are greater than the needs of the present life demand, and cannot, therefore, be explained by it—an argument which reappears in Mr. Balfour's *Theism and Humanism*—owes its apparent strength to the ignoring of one whole side of human nature, and that, its most important one. I agree that if human life were constructed for the "lease of a single life," and that, the life of the individual, the argument would be unassailable. But it is one of the facts of the situation that man is a member of a social group, that his whole nature is fashioned with reference to the existence and the needs of the group, and, therefore, his capacities must be judged, not from what are his minimum needs considered as a mere living object, but from the dual point of view of individual and social life. To study man apart from group life is much like taking a steam engine to pieces and attempt-

ing to get an idea of it as a whole by an elaborate examination of its parts quite out of relation to each other. Man's feelings and capacities have on the one side reference to his own preservation, but on the other side they have no less clear reference to the needs of the group. And his nature is such that his feelings crave the existence of the group for their satisfaction.

There is a glimpse of this truth in a remark of Dr. Mellone's that " If the immortal life is to be more than a name for a shadow, it must be a life where men are members one of another, not less, but more, than they are here." Just so. An immortality of solitude would be the most horrible thing imaginable. The social instincts demand satisfaction, and how is that to be given in the absence of conditions substantially different from those that now exist? It is the social side of human nature that Dr. Martineau leaves out of account, and it is the lack of recognition of this factor which gives strength to nearly all of the current Theistic apologies. Men and women work, and give themselves to the work, in the belief that their family, their friends, and their kind will benefit thereby. The brightest and the best of the race have been inspired by this ideal, even though they may have used a religious terminology in expressing themselves. But their sentiments and their capacities are in no wise directed towards a future life, their whole significance lies in their relation to that racial life from which we all spring, and in which we are ultimately merged.

Finally, when Dr. Martineau criticizes the capacities of man in terms of his actual " needs "—again an argument upon which the late A. R. Wallace laid considerable stress—it is clear that what he has in mind

is a mere sufficiency for the maintenance of life. But, surely, from almost any point of view, to live a *human* life implies more than the ability to maintain a mere existence. It is essential to all forms of life that there shall be present sufficient capacity to ward off those forces that make for disintegration; that is an irreducible minimum. But it is one of the consequences of the social development of man that there shall be added to these irreducible needs certain mental, moral, and other needs without which life, even to the savage, would not be worth the living. So that while it may be true to say that the powers of man are greater than would be required to maintain a mere existence, it is emphatically not true that they are an enormous overprovision for the needs of man in other directions. On the contrary, our desires constantly tend to outstrip our powers, and to act as the spur that leads to development. It is plain, also, that instead of there being a surplusage of power, it is the impotence of human strength in the face of desires craving satisfaction of which the best of us are keenly conscious that adds the note of tragedy to many lives.

The fact is that Dr. Martineau, and in this respect he is in the company of most religious writers, only justifies his conclusion by restricting his survey to the lower aspects of human nature. And it is not the least curious feature of the situation that the very people who stand forward as the champions of a higher and more spiritual side of human nature are the ones who insist upon our taking a lower, a coarser, and a more material view of life in order to gain support for their theory of survival after death.

There is a further criticism of a not less fundamental

character that may be passed upon this attempt to depreciate the value of life here in order to appreciate its value in a supposed elsewhere. Immanuel Kant said that those who chafed against the limitations of the understanding were like a bird protesting against the resistance which the atmosphere offered to its flight, ignorant all the time that it was that very resistance to which it owed its ability to lift itself from the ground. One might well apply the same comment to the argument that we are now considering. The believer in survival, when he uses the alleged limitations of life here as a reason for believing in a life elsewhere, is complaining of the only conditions under which life would be worth the living. Could the believer in survival be transported to a sphere of existence in which the conditions of which he complains were absent he would be in the position of one trying to breathe in an atmosphere from which all the oxygen had been extracted.

We may commence the proof of this with the simple fact that neither the animal organs nor their functions, neither our desires nor our feelings are developed at random or *in vacuo*. They are always developed in relation to a fairly definite set of conditions. This is so well understood that scientists have no hesitation in concluding from the examination of a given structure the kind of environment in which an animal lived. And if we take the human body we may deal with it from precisely the same point of view. Thus, the weight of the body bears a direct relation to the mass of the earth. If the earth's mass were ten times what it is, while our bodies remained as they are, we should be crushed beneath our own weight. If our bodies

were one tenth the weight they are we should find it some trouble to retain a position of comfort on the planet. Modify the constituents of the atmosphere beyond a certain point and life would become impossible. Raise or lower the temperature beyond a certain degree and we should have the same result. The organs of respiration and digestion, the amount of muscular strength normally developed, have all direct reference to the conditions of life as they now exist. These are very familiar considerations, and they involve well established principles. It is the more remarkable that it is not generally recognized how strongly, even decisively, they go against the theory of survival beyond death.

For the strength of the argument rests upon the consideration that this question of relation to environment as an essential condition of development applies no less strongly to all our psychical qualities than it does to our physical structure. In the first place development must take place in relation to an existing environment, not to one that is yet to be. Retrospective some of the stages of development may be, as is seen in some of the phases of embryological development, there may even be prospective phases of development such as we have in the gradual development of the sex feelings, but in either case there is a direct reference to an environment that is actually existing now. A development related to a non-existent environment is not alone unthinkable, it is, if we may judge from all we know of the laws of life, a sheer impossibility.

Next, in any other environment than the present one, or in an environment fundamentally different

from the present one, human qualities would be without meaning or value. We may take as a striking proof of this the very thing that is used by the believer in survival as a strong indication of there being another life, that is, the sense of imperfection or of dissatisfaction with existing conditions. This, we are told, seeing that every function has an application somewhere, is an indication that elsewhere there is a state of existence where that feeling of dissatisfaction will be removed, and as that does not, even cannot, occur here, we must assume another life where the desire for perfection will be gratified.

A wilder assumption could not be made. What, after all, is the meaning of the sense of imperfection, or, positively, the desire for perfection? Reduced to its lowest terms it is no more than a manifestation of the principle of natural selection in its simplest aspect. The essential conduct of life in its most primitive form is a simple reaction that responds to life preserving and shrinks from life destroying stimuli. The development of special sense organs enables the animal to do this more effectually, and as we mount in the scale the mechanisms by which the animal guards itself from destruction become more and more elaborate. The highest form of this process is reached when we come to a form of life that is capable of appreciating a future, and therefore acts, not only under the impulse of immediate pains and pleasure, but under the impulse of prospective pleasures and pains. And when we eventually reach the world of human ideas and ideals we have reached the highest form of all. For we have then gained the stage of socialized man, a stage when man creates for himself and his fellows an ideal

environment and works for its consummation. But from the lowest form of life to the highest, from the avoidance by one of the lower organisms of a dangerous object, to man shrinking from unpleasant feelings, and seeking the gratification of desires, we have substantially the same class of phenomena. And if more of our leading writers possessed the capacity for *thinking* scientifically, instead of merely having the industry to overload their minds with ill-digested scientific facts, there would be no need for this point to be stressed here. Perhaps it may be taken as proof of the statement that while the number of people with a knowledge of scientific facts has increased enormously, the scientific thinker is as rare as ever.

But this feeling of dissatisfaction has not the remotest reference to another state of existence, it implies only that we desire some change in the existing one. Thus, when a man steps on my corn I desire him to get off. If I am a " mere Materialist " I may see in this no more than the plain desire to get rid of a painful sensation. But if I am full of mystical longings, or if I belong to a certain school of religionists, I shall see in the desire that the man will get off my corn a sure indication of the existence of some other world where either corns or careless people do not exist. And I quite fail to see that this conclusion is a bit more absurd than is the one that because we are dissatisfied with certain things here and have an idea of a better state, therefore there must be another world in which that ideal will be realized.

The important truth here is that just as the pain from the man standing on my corn causes me to react against it, so the unpleasant feelings aroused by certain things

in the social environment cause me to react against them. The sense of imperfection is, therefore, no promise of perfection, but only a means of driving us along the road of improvement. It is the condition of development, and so long as development continues, so long will the sense of imperfection continue. And if there is another life, and if, as we are assured, development will go on there, then those who inherit that life will have the same sense of discomfort there that they have here. There will be the same discontent with what is actually existing as the indispensable condition for achieving what is aimed at. A state of existence in which this feeling did not exist would be a state in which complete equilibrium had been reached, and complete equilibrium is only another name for absolute stagnation. So that the argument of the religionist really amounts to this: that in order to obtain complete moral satisfaction with life we must live again under such conditions as will make satisfaction of any sort an impossibility.

This dependence of the value of human qualities upon the prevalence of a definite set of conditions is far more intimate than any religionist ever admits. Constantly we find believers in survival dwelling upon the blow dealt to human affection by death, and the joy of reunion in a state where death has no place. Human affection, we are constantly being told, is a mockery if life ends at the grave, and human love would wither in face of the conviction that death ends all. Now I have no desire to deny either that death does bring grief, or to minimise the grief that is felt, or to even wish to do so. On the contrary, my point here is that it is from the grief associated with death

that our deepest and strongest affections spring, and that in the absence of death the better aspects of life would lose their value. Here Kant's analogy of the bird and the atmosphere strictly applies. In complaining of the presence of death we are overlooking the important part it plays in the development of the better parts of our nature.

Birth and death offer the living paradox that while apparently the negation of each other, they are, strictly speaking, conplementary facts. Birth is the other side of death, death is the other side of birth; the significance of the cradle is to be found in the grave; the grave finds its justification in the cradle. On these two complementary facts all human affection centres. In a world where death did not occur affection would wither and love be without meaning. For an absence of death would mean an absence of birth and of all that birth implies. What meaning would such terms as husband and wife, parent and child, or family have in a world where immortality was a fact and death an unknown thing? And if anyone tries, in thought, to take away all that is owing to these relationships, what would there be left worth bothering about? There is a limit to the attractiveness of the mere duration of days. The most attractive of things becomes stale in time. There is a saturation point in human affection as there is with the chemical elements. And one might well stand appalled at the idea of living age after age and with no prospect of any termination. If there is anything that would make existence an unendurable horror it is that.

The proof of what has been said may be given in the shape of one or two homely illustrations. Assume that of two persons one is by some chance protected against

accident, sickness, and death. The other is normally constituted and exposed to all the usual accidents of human nature. To which of the two will our affections the most naturally turn? Decidedly we should not feel anxious about the first. Why should we. His security is assured, and when one has all eternity before him there is no need for worry or anxiety. Inevitably our concern and our affection would gravitate to the second one. That is, I think, about as certain as anything could well be.

Or one may take another instance. Most of us had someone belonging to us on one of the fighting fronts during the recent war, and each will know the constant anxiety as to their welfare and the heightened affection with which we regarded them. But suppose that we had felt absolutely assured that nothing whatever could happen to them, that they were positively protected against accident, wounds, or any other form of destruction. Should we have had the same yearning affection for them? I do not think it at all likely. In that arid atmosphere our affection would wither into a very languid sort of interest, even if it survived at all.

And those who care to analyse their feelings will soon discover that as parents their love for their children does not rest upon a conviction of their immortality, but upon the certainty of their mortality. And that is in line with all that we know of the emotions. We are all concerned, not about the things of which we are certain, but about those of which we are doubtful. That we would like more of a thing is really the essential condition of our liking it at all. We simply reverse the order of things when we make permanence the condition of attachment.

The great need is for people to look this fact of death in the face with their minds free from the mistaken ideas concerning it that are the outcome of centuries of theological teaching. And when we do that, we see that the picture of death as the king of terrors is an idle superstition. That death is the occasion of great grief is indisputable, but that it is also the groundwork of our deepest affections is quite certain, and that love withers in the debilitated atmosphere of perpetual existence is not less certain. Life is, in short, set in a framework of death. It is death that gives an emotional background to the future. It defines life, conditions it, and gives it its meaning and value. Religious teaching has filled the world with a senseless fear of death; it is left for scientific Freethought to provide us with an understanding of its presence, and so detect its true place in the pageant of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUESTION OF WASTE.

THERE remains but one other phase of what we may call the moral argument for immortality. This takes the form of dwelling upon the enormous waste of material, of capacity, and of development if man's career is cut short at death. Again the argument is common to all classes of believers, but we will take it as presented by Dr. Martineau. He says: —

> I do not know that there is anything in nature (unless, indeed, it be the reported blotting out of suns in the stellar heavens) which can be compared in wastefulness with the extinction of great minds; their gathered resources, their unfailing tact, their luminous insight, are not like instincts that can be handed down; they are absolutely personal and inalienable, grand conditions of future power, unavailable for the race, and perfect for an ulterior growth of the individual. If that growth is not to be, the most brilliant genius bursts and vanishes like a firework in the night (*Study of Religion,* Sec. Ed., II., p. 356).

The first comment to be made upon this is that the premises of the argument bear no relation to the conclusions reached. The plea is that genius, being purely personal, the race loses all benefits therefrom through the death of the individual. Having made the complaint he asserts that a remedy is to be found in the

individual living in another world with which the present one has no connection. But in what way can a man living in another world remove the grievance that results from his not living in this one? If he leaves this world it loses his presence, and his living somewhere else does not bring him back again. Whatever the next world may be like, let us hope that there is a greater regard shown there for logic than many believers in it display while in this one.

But assuming the case to be as stated, is there anything in connection with a particular instance of waste in nature that should cause surprise, or demand a special explanation? Waste is no exception, it is rather the rule. A thousand seeds are produced for one that fructifies, a thousand forms of life for one that reaches maturity. Nay, if the aim of nature, or of God, is the production of a perfect form of life, all the imperfect forms of life that have been, and are, represent so much wasted material. We may all wish that nature would display greater economy than she does, but the facts are there and it is our business to frame our theories in accordance therewith and not to make our desires the measure of the necessities of existence.

At any rate, if the qualities of genius are absolutely personal and inalienable, then departure from this life robs the race of the benefit of their presence, whether the individual goes on living elsewhere or not. What we may reasonably question is whether the case has been correctly stated by Dr. Martineau, and whether the qualities of genius are strictly personal in the sense that he uses the expression. It is quite true that the qualities that go to make a genius are centred in an

individual, but for that matter so are those that go to the make-up of an idiot. And the assumed over-provision of capacity in some cases may well be placed at the side of the actual under-provision in other cases. But as a matter of fact there is not one of the qualities that go to make up a genius that is not possessed in some degree by others, while their manifestation in a superior measure is as much racial as personal, and is quite as much an expression of racial inheritance as of personal endowment. We have all heard of the Scot who professed admiration for Shakespeare because there were things that came into his head that never entered the mind of his admirer. But an idea having entered the head of a genius does become the property of more average minds. It took a genius to express the law of gravitation, but that once done a very ordinary mind may claim it as part of its intellectual wealth. And it is precisely because genius can impart some of its greatness to others that it is of such value to all. Were it otherwise the race would be doomed to remain intellectual paupers, forever dependent upon the scraps thrown by a few favoured individuals, but without the capacity to move onward. The world would indeed be in a sad way did it not possess the power to annex the inspiration of some of its choicest minds.

The truth is that in order to arrive at a pre-determined conclusion the issue is quite wrongly stated. The religionist claims for the individual what actually belongs to the race and springs from the corporate life of the group. Thus, when we say that man is capable of indefinite development, or can achieve greater possibilities than those actually accomplished, we are making statements that are true, not of the individual,

but of the race. For, as an individual, man is not capable of indefinite development. His organization, the operation of the normal laws of decay, the fact of inevitable death, all combine to mark a point—however difficult it may be precisely to fix it—beyond which the development of the individual cannot go. Nor is the truth of this affected by the fact that a poet, a musician, or some gifted individual may, through an accident of the environment, never manifest all that he might have displayed under more favourable conditions. There is a substantial difference between the prevention of a quality expressing itself in its full strength and an indefinite expansion of the same quality. A man from lack of nutrition may be unable to lift a hundredweight, but it does not follow that with sufficient nutrition he could lift a ton. The indefinite development of an individual can only have an intelligible meaning so long as it refers to our ignorance of the limits of development in particular instances.

As an individual, and no matter how much he is elevated above the average of his fellows, man has only a limited capacity for development. It is not he that perpetually progresses, but the race. That this is so is shown by the fact that the individual all along depends for his achievements upon the social heritage that awaits him. Language, literature, scientific discoveries, social developments are the conditions that determine how far even the greatest genius may travel. And these things are the products of the accumulated labours of the race. It is impossible to place any limits to development here, and we are therefore justified in speaking, in this connection, of

indefinite development or of incalculable possibilities. But the individual who is taken from the social matrix by death is as surely divorced from the possibilities of progress as are the inhabitants of a desert island from the advantages of national life.

Progress, therefore, is not a fact of individual development but of racial continuity. It is expressed through the individual but it is achieved by the race. A developed humanity is built up from the life of humanity as a whole. It is from looking at the race as it was and as it is that we derive the notion of continuous progress, and it is by a trick of the imagination that we transfer the idea of perpetual progress from the race to the individual. And it is surely the most monstrous of egotisms to assert that unless an individual can exhaust the possibilities of all the achievements of preceding generations, and exhaust, too, the consequences of anything done by himself, that life must be considered a failure. It is when we subject the religious view of man to analysis that we discover how monstrously egotistical and selfish it is. The old Greek comparison of life to a swift runner carrying a torch and handing it, burning brightly, to his successor, expresses a far saner and nobler view of life than the one that has become current under the influence of Christian teaching.

We may here glance for a moment at another view of the same subject as expressed by Mr. Schiller. He puts the moral argument for immortality (*Humanism*, pp. 253-4) on the ground that without immortality character is lost at death, and the basis of the moral order is denied. But character, like everything else, is something that is developed in relation to a specific

set of circumstances. In this case it is the expression of certain relations to one's fellows. A man must be strong, steady, honest, loyal, etc., in relation to something or someone. And it is quite clear in this case what the circumstances are to which these qualities have reference. They are developed in relation to a certain set of social conditions, and without them would be of no value whatever. And to argue that because the conditions of life here prevent the realization of a perfect character, there must be another state of existence where the conditions are so far different that they will permit there what is impossible here, is to assume the existence of conditions that make character of no use at all. To put the matter briefly, the qualities which we praise in human nature are only of value in view of the existence of a certain set of conditions. Consequently, if we consider the next life as providing opportunities for the development of *our* character we must think of the next life as being similar to this one. And if we think of it as being similar the reason given for its existence is negatived. All that is gained by existence in the next world might as easily be gained here. If, on the other hand, the conditions of life in the next world are different from what they are here we shall be altogether out of place. We shall no more fit it than a bird could live in the sea or a fish in the air.[1]

[1] Perhaps the real ground for the insistence of a future life is given, so far as the majority are concerned, in Dr. Mellone's observation that "at bottom the belief in immortality depends on the belief in God." So that all the elaborate evidence collected from an examination of the possibilities and activities of human nature are really so many

The full significance of the argument we have been considering should now be apparent. It is one that goes to the very root of the scientific case against, not merely the belief in immortality, but against religion in general. Many sociologists are to-day taking up the position that organized religion represents a synthesis of social ideals, and is thus being continuously modified by changes in the social medium. This view certainly contains a truth, the exact value of which it is not necessary to estimate. But it is at least true that once the religious idea is fairly under way it lives by an exploitation of the social qualities, and that in an increasing measure. In early stages of social culture we can see all the social qualities expressed in terms of religion. The conditions of life make this association inevitable. And it is only by very slow degrees that some of the outlying departments of life throw off the control of theology. But in spite of the fiercest opposition the reinterpretation of life in terms of a naturalistic causation goes on, first in one direction, and then in another. That the process is

pleas for another belief which is open to dispute. First, we have the belief in a future life justified on the ground that it satisfies the demands of our moral nature. We are told that as there are so many things in this world that ought not to be, God's justice is vindicated by another world in which inequalities and injustices are removed. This point having been gained, we are next told that there must be a future life because there is a God, and he would not create man for his existence to terminate at death. Thus, the belief in a future life becomes alternately the ground and the product of the belief in God. A belief in urgent need of evidence is justified by another belief itself in even still greater need of justification!

nearing the end only a mind blind to the logic of events can doubt.

In the last few chapters we have been trying to show how the moral desires and feelings of man have been wrongly interpreted in terms of a desire for a future life. A body of feeling that has been developed in the course of social evolution, and has application only to man's life here, has been wrongly interpreted as affording sure indication of a life beyond the grave. As in so many other instances we have the primitive conception of things in direct conflict with a more scientific interpretation of nature. Of this primitive view theology stands as the ardent champion. In self-defence it is thus driven to obstruct the healthy working of the social forces, and under the pretence of gratifying the desires of man really to hinder their rational expression.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SOURCE OF THE SOUL.

In an earlier chapter it was remarked that the professed reasons for believing in a future life and the causes of the belief do not coincide. Were it otherwise there would be no necessity for saying more than has already been said. But the reasons examined leave the question of origin untouched, and to the evolutionist it is not enough merely to know that a belief is false, there still remains the question, Why did people ever come to accept it as true? It is that question which is now to be answered, and which to the scientific mind should be decisive. Logically, the question of origin should have come first, but there are times when it is advisable to put convenience before logic, and this would seem to be one of them. Naturally, the findings of anthropology would have been enough for many, but there would have still remained a very large number who would have continued to be influenced by the arguments we have been examining, and, at any rate, having shown the worthlessness of the current pleas for the belief in a future life the way is better prepared for the question of origin. And even with those who are not convinced the bias may be of a less strenuous kind.

We may commence with the fact that the belief in survival clearly ante-dates all the arguments that are now used for its establishment. The experience of

each will show that no one who believes in immortality does so as a consequence of the appeal to philosophy. Even though a sane philosophy supported the belief, it is clear that it did not originate there. And the same truth holds equally of the race and the individual. The belief in survival beyond death is one of the oldest of religious beliefs; it appears before the existence of the belief in God, and it would be little short of insanity to conceive savages whose ignorance of natural process is most profound basing their belief upon any one of the arguments discussed in the preceding pages. All these arguments belong to a period when a long-standing belief is being challenged by more exact knowledge. They are a sign of the end, not an indication of the beginning.

It was also pointed out that an essential and universal feature of the belief in survival is that man is a duality—there is the body and there is something else allied to and yet independent of it. Our enquiry, then, narrows itself to this: Taking for granted the fact, the unquestionable fact, that the modern belief in the soul is ultimately derived from those beliefs which meet us in the lower stages of culture, what is there in the experience of primitive humanity which would suggest the conception of a double inhabiting the body and surviving its disintegration? That is the essential question, and the answer must be as wide as the facts to be explained. It must cover all the beliefs of the peoples of the world.

To this question there are only three answers possible. The first is that the knowledge was given man by direct supernatural revelation. As, however, no one worthy of attention believes in that kind of

revelation to-day, that explanation may be summarily dismissed. The second is that some of the facts upon which the belief in survival is based are so obvious and so universal that the inevitable conclusion was forced upon man at a very early stage of his history, while it was left for a more sophisticated generation to discover the reasons for it. The decisive reply to this is that no one knows what these obvious facts are. There are no facts that are common to all and to which all can appeal. Such facts as are utilized by the believer are not alone subjects of dispute, but they can be shown to be susceptible of a quite different explanation. We are therefore thrown back upon a third explanation, namely, that in the conditions of primitive thought and society we can find a quite sufficient reason for the existence of one of the most universal of human illusions. That explanation lies to hand, well worked out in the writings of such men as Tylor, Spencer, Frazer, and others, and in what follows I have but to summarize their investigations, leaving it for those who wish for further details to study the works for themselves.

The distance between the primitive and the modern point of view is strikingly shown in the fact that the problem that fronts us is the complete reverse of that which fronted primitive humanity. With us the fact of death, natural death, is obvious and inevitable, and our difficulty is to conceive man's continuing to exist beyond the grave. And to us it seems that the belief in an after life is a consequence of either reflection or discovery. The savage outlook is quite different and distinct. Death does not come to him as part of a natural sequence, but as an abrupt and non-necessary

break. His difficulty is not that of conceiving how man can continue to live, but how he can leave off living. With him it is not reflection and growing knowledge that leads to a belief in a future life; continued existence is a datum of his thinking, and his difficulty lies in thinking of man ceasing to be. The modern mind thinks it discovers immortal life; the task of the primitive intelligence was to discover death.

That death and not life is the puzzle that presents itself to the primitive intelligence is seen from the wide-spread myths as to how death came into existence. As in the Christian mythology, we find all over the world legends of the way in which death was introduced. Men are pictured as being by nature immortal, and death is afterwards introduced as a consequence of disobedience or of magic or of the jealousy of the gods. Sir James Frazer has, in the third chapter of his work *The Belief in Immortality,* furnished many examples of these legends, but they can be collected from almost any first-class work on the subject. There would certainly not be these wide-spread stories of how death came into the world if death appeared to the primitive intelligence as it appears to ours. But how could it? What can man, just emerging from the animal stage, know of the causes that make death inevitable? It is true that he must have always seen men die, but, on the other hand, many of these deaths are from violence, or are patently the consequence of violence, others are from disease, which is universally attributed to magic or to the action of some evilly disposed spirit, and in the absence of violence or magic there seems no reason to the savage intelligence why men should not live for ever, or, to put it more

correctly, perhaps, there is no adequate reason why men should die when they do.

The following description given by Frazer of the beliefs of the Abipone Indians about death can be taken as substantially a correct description of what we may regard as primitive man's attitude toward the fact of death. He tells us that many savage races do not to-day accept death in the modern sense.

> They are even of opinion that they would never die at all if it were not for the maleficent arts of sorcerers who cut the vital thread prematurely short. In other words, they disbelieve in what we call a natural death; they think that all men are naturally immortal in this life, and that every death which takes place is in fact a violent death inflicted by the hand of a human enemy, though in many cases the foe is invisible and works his fell purpose not by a sword or a spear but by magic. Thus the Abipones, a now extinct tribe of horse Indians in Paraguay, used to allege that they would be immortal and that none of them would die if only the Spaniards and the sorcerers could be banished from America; for they were in the habit of attributing every death, whatever its cause, either to the baleful arts of sorcerers or to the firearms of the Spaniards. Even if a man died riddled with wounds, with his bones smashed, or through the exhaustion of old age, these Indians would all deny that the wounds or the old age was the cause of his death, they firmly believed that the death was brought about by magic, and they would make careful enquiries to discover the sorcerer who had cast this fatal spell on their comrade.

There is little use in multiplying quotations to the one end. Durkheim and Wundt fully endorse the English

investigators here, and the whole bears out Frazer's conclusion that "at a certain stage of social and intellectual evolution men have believed themselves to be naturally immortal in this life and have regarded death by disease or even by accident or violence as an unnatural event which has been brought about by sorcery and which must be avenged by the death of the sorcerer." [1]

This fact of man being originally ignorant of the real nature of death is of considerable importance to the history of the soul theory. It leaves the road clear for its beginning. If man had commenced his reflective existence with a knowledge of death, or with the conviction that death was the end of his individual existence, a theory or a belief that man continued to exist beyond death would not have been so easily or so

[1] Apart from this objective presentment of the case, there are subjective conditions that would make it a matter of great difficulty, if not an impossibility, for the primitive mind to picture death as a natural fact. Existence is a much easier conception than non-existence, and the extinction of individuality is far too abstract a notion for the undeveloped mind to conceive. Even the civilized intelligence finds it very difficult to think of oneself as non-existent. Part of the feeling expressed at the thought of the extinction of individuality is due to the inability to realize non-existence. When people exclaim at the thought of non-existence they are generally in the position of thinking of themselves as being conscious of their own absolute unconsciousness. This confusion was long ago noted by Lucretius who attributed the power of the priesthood to the fact that so few realized the truth that "death was death indeed." Complete oblivion carries with it no terrors and provides no rational scope for fears. It is only the false conception of a consciousness of one's own unconsciousness that does this.

thoroughly established. As it was the thought of the non-existence of the individual after death had to establish itself in the face of a theory already well accepted, and one which, as we shall see, could appeal to a whole host of experiences which were ignorantly taken to give it direct support. Indeed, it is not the relatively small degree to which a scientific view of man and of nature has taken hold of the human mind that should give us ground for surprise; the wonder is that with so many thousands of generations start, and with so many interests bound up with the perpetuation of primitive modes of thinking, Free-thinking views of man should have obtained the hold they have on the human intellect.

One other word of caution may be needed here. We are so familiar to-day with the fact that the scientific and philosophic theories of nature by which the mental life of educated men and women is guided are the products of long and careful reflection, that we are apt to credit primitive humanity with the same careful reasoning before arriving at definite conclusions. That would be, we are convinced, to take quite a wrong view of the situation. A very striking characteristic of primitive intelligence appears to be its lack of curiosity concerning the nature of the processes that go on around it. Things are accepted for what they are, or appear to be, and the ideas that grow up concerning them must be conceived as of the kind that develop as the product of frequently recurring experiences, and not as the consequence of men sitting down anxious to find an explanation of things that have hitherto puzzled them. So with the majority of people to-day, convictions concerning things arise in a

gradual, unreflective manner and are already established when reflection discovers their existence.

Now from all parts of the world, and from people living in various stages of what we may call the lower culture, there comes unquestionable evidence, not alone of the way in which man came to believe in a " soul " or double, but of the means by which he actually comes to believe in it to-day. Substantially, it begins in the primitive inability to discriminate between objective and subjective experiences. With ourselves there is a very real distinction drawn between our experiences during sleep and those during our waking hours. And during even waking hours the civilized human is more or less on his guard to distinguish between reality and illusion. With primitive peoples no such clear line of demarcation exists. Experience is experience, and whether it occurs during wakefulness or during sleep makes no difference to primitive man. What the savage sees in his dream is to him quite real. When he visits, during sleep, distant places, it is complete evidence that he has been there. When he sees absent people during sleep it is evidence that they have come to him. The persistence of the legends of people getting out of the body, travelling abroad and then returning, is evidence of how deeply rooted this belief is. It represents, in fact, one of the oldest and most universal of all human superstitions. Even in the Bible we have precisely the same thing, no small number of the messages given to the characters therein being delivered during sleep.

A whole host of other experiences support this idea of a double able to leave the body and return to it again. The existence of so impalpable a thing as an

echo, the shadow thrown by a man, the universal explanation of insanity, epilepsy, etc., as being due to the possession of the body by a foreign spirit, all support the primary assumption that man is a duality composed of a body that is seen, and a copy of the body that is unseen. Again I refrain from enlarging these pages by a multiplication of instances, but will content myself with a summary of the facts as given by Tylor: —

> It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a low level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena, the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom. These two are evidently in close connection with the body, the life as enabling it to feel and think and act, the phantom as being its image or second self; both, also, are perceived to be things separable from the body, the life as able to go away and leave it insensible of death, the phantom as appearing to people at a distance from it. The second step would seem also easy for savages to make, seeing how extremely difficult civilized men have found it to unmake. It is merely to combine the life and the phantom. As both belong to the body, why should they not also belong to one another, and be manifestations of one and the same soul? Let them then be considered as united, and the result is that well-

known conception which may be described as an apparitional-soul, a ghost-soul. This, at any rate, corresponds with the actual conception of the personal soul or spirit among the lower races, which may be defined as follows : it is a thin unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow; the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates; independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present; capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place; mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting physical power, and especially appearing to men waking or asleep as a phantasm separate from the body of which it bears the likeness; continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body; able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things (*Primitive Culture*, Vol. I., pp. 428-9).

This may be taken as a fair and comprehensive description of the " soul " or double as it appears in primitive thought, and is a fair picture of the conception of the soul as it runs right through the history of religions. And the fact that the soul or ghost when it appears in religious legends is always a picture of the living man in his bodily form is almost enough by itself to substantiate this account of the dream-origin of the soul.

This theory is, as I have said, endorsed by the savage conception of the nature of disease, whether mental or physical, as being due to some evil spirit taking possession of the body. In another work [2] I

[2] *Religion and Sex,* Chapters III., V., and VI.

have pointed out to how great an extent in the history of religions, and as a consequence of this mistaken view of the nature of illusion and mental states, the deliberate cultivation of abnormal states of mind by fasting, the taking of drugs, and the systematic ill-treatment of the body, has been utilized as a means of keeping alive the sense of supernatural illumination and of intercourse with a ghostly world. And in truth the story of religion in this respect forms a continuous whole from the visions of the savage resulting from the states of mind into which accident or design throws him, down to the latest message from the spirit-world received by the present day spiritualistic medium.

The idea of a double having originated in the manner described there follow developments that are strictly logical in their nature, and important in their social consequences. It is not alone living things that are seen in dreams, but inanimate ones also. It is therefore a simple matter to conclude that these likewise have their double. Death, again, is not the destruction of the ghost, but merely its separation from the body.[3] And it will enter the next world exactly as it left this one. Hence the practice of disfiguring the dead bodies of enemies so that their mutilated ghosts will parade the spirit world in that condition, and also the custom of killing one's old relatives before sickness overtakes

[3] The savage does not assert immortality of the ghost, but merely its continued existence for a longer or shorter period. And as a matter of fact most savages believe that after a time the older ghosts are really dissipated. They are most active just after death, but when the memory of them fades their existence fades also. This is exactly what one would expect to be the case.

them in order to ensure that their ghosts will be strong in the realm of shades.

The next world is a pale copy of this one and the ghost but an attenuated copy of the man. He has the same needs there that he had here, and it is the duty of the living to supply them. Weapons are accordingly buried with the dead warrior or hunter so that he may use their spirits in fighting or in hunting. Food is buried with the dead so that its spirit may feed ghostly bodies. The modern practice of scattering flowers on a grave is a direct survival of this practice of supplying the ghost of the dead with food.

A more ghastly consequence of this attending to the wants of the ghost is that of supplying it with wives and attendants. Slaves are killed so that their ghosts may attend on the dead chief, wives so that they may accompany their husbands to the ghostland, the number of wives and attendants killed depending on the importance of the dead man. Sheep and oxen are also, in many cases, burned on the grave, and horses on that of warriors.[4] The world-wide character of these customs may serve as a fitting comment on those who argue that the belief in a future life has an elevating effect on human nature.

[4] At the funeral of Edward VII his horse was led behind the coffin to the grave. In earlier times it would have been killed. But we have a clear survival of this primitive practice. It is striking that it is in connection with the royalty and aristocracy of a country that we find the clearest illustrations of savage ideas. In this respect the " higher " social orders are nearer the savage than are the " lower " ones. Thus, Tylor cites the case of a French king whose effigy was for forty days after death solemnly served with food with all the ceremonial that accompanied it while the king was living. But kingship itself, as Frazer has shown, is a survival of pure savagery.

But it would be a mistake to assume that these practices are followed out of affection for the ghost. On the contrary, the principal emotion felt in connection with the ghost is that of fear. As most of the ills of life are attributed to the ghost this is not surprising, and the fear which the ignorant among ourselves still have of ghosts is reminiscent of one of the oldest of human feelings. There is first of all the practice of ghost dodging, as illustrated in the way the body is buried. The dead is carried out by the window, or through a hole made in the side of the house, which is afterwards blocked up again, the theory being that as the ghost can only return by the way that it went out return is made impossible. Or the body is taken to the grave by a roundabout way so that it may be difficult for it to get back again. There are numerous variations, but the idea and the purpose of them all is the same.

Another very striking survival of this fear of the ghost we have still with us in our own practice of wearing black after a death. Careful investigation and comparison of customs all over the world leaves little room for doubt that the wearing of mourning clothes, or mourning masks, or the custom of painting the bodies of relatives after a death are all so many forms of disguise. It is assumed that the ghost will not know the living in their unusual dress or disguise. It is also in order to avoid recognition by spirits who might wish to injure them that the Tongans change their war-costume at every battle. The same desire to be secured from the attentions of the ghost leads the Chinese to call their best beloved children by the most worthless names. In ancient Egypt the children who were

thought the most of were the worst clad. In all probability the custom with many of the tribes of India of having two names, one a real one that is never disclosed, and one by which the child is known, had its origin in the same fear.

Finally, it has to be noted that just as the soul is thought of as a diminutive copy of the body, so the next world is modelled upon this one, the only difference being that there is more of what people like and less of what they dislike. In the next world, says Tylor,—

> There the soul of the dead Karen, with the souls of his axe and cleaver, builds his house and cuts rice; the shade of the Algonquin hunter hunts souls of beaver and elk, walking on the souls of his snow-shoes over the soul of the snow; the fur-wrapped Kamchadel drives his dog-sledge; the Zulu milks his cows and drives his cattle to the kraal; South American tribes live on, whole or mutilated, healthy or sick, as they left this world, leading their old lives, and having their wives with them again, though, indeed, as the Auracanians said, they have no more children, for they are but souls. Soul land is dream land, in its shadowy unreal pictures, for which, nevertheless, material reality so plainly furnished the models.

The so-called higher religions follow the same plan. The Mohammedan, the Christian, the Brahman, each pictures the next world as making up for the deficiencies they have experienced in this one. Religions usually remain true to type, however much they may vary in form.

There are two points here that I wish to stress. The

first is that we have a quite unbroken history of the soul idea from its beginning in the fear-stricken ignorance of the primitive savage up to its latest manifestation in the most " liberal " of religious sects. There is no break anywhere. Each form arises out of that which went before, is built upon it, and is identical with it save for such modifications as current experience and knowledge forces upon it. There is, therefore, no doubt as to how the idea of a soul and of a future life came into existence. The nature of its origin lies open for all who will to read. As Tylor says, " The animism of savages stands for and by itself; it explains its own origin. The animism of civilized men, while more appropriate to advanced knowledge, is in great measure only explicable as a developed product of the older and ruder system." But a product of that older system it undoubtedly is, and but for the assumption of the savage the soul would never have existed. It owes its existence to an inevitable psychological blunder made by the primitive savage.

The second point is that if this theory be accepted as true, the whole notion of a soul as something that is independent of the body, and which survives the disintegration of the body stands self-condemned. There may still be room for discussion as to the nature of the various phases of development this belief in a soul has undergone, but there can be no longer debate as to whether it is true or not. You may reject the anthropological conclusion and accept the animistic one, but you cannot accept both. It is beyond question that if the savage had known what we know concerning the brain and the nervous system, had he

known what we know concerning the nature of the forces around us, had he been in our place, neither gods nor ghosts would ever have come into existence. The blunder was inevitable to his ignorance; but there is surely no justification for our preserving his blunder in the face of our better knowledge, and retaining his interpretation of phenomena which our own knowledge enables us more accurately to understand.

CHAPTER X.

SPIRITUALISM.

An examination of the belief in a future life which contained no reference to the prevalent belief in what is known as Spiritualism would be considered by many to be incomplete. And for various reasons a study of Spiritualism is worth the making. Quite apart from the historical interest of such an enquiry, the belief in and the practice of Spiritualism open up many important questions in both normal and abnormal psychology. Unfortunately, the scope of the present work will permit only a very brief study of the subject, although I hope to present at least the outlines of what I conceive to be the right method of conducting such an examination.

To begin with, the Spiritualist stands alone among the believers in a future life in claiming that his case rests upon observed and verifiable facts. Certainly the array of eminent men who at one time or another have given the Spiritualistic theory a more or less qualified support is very striking, and if that kind of testimony were enough to establish the truth of a theory Spiritualism would stand a fair chance of being accepted as true. But one remembers that there is not a falsity on the face of the earth that has not had the support of eminent men. Indeed, without it a false belief would stand very little chance of ever being established. Eminent men testified to the truth

of a flat earth, to the movement of the sun round the earth, to the reality of witchcraft, and other absurdities. There is nothing in the history of science that would lead one to accept the testimony of a great man on any subject as of necessity final, and when the great man happens to be dealing with something that is outside his special province, then his evidence is still less conclusive. So the appeal to great names leaves the genuinely scientific enquirer quite cold. If authority could permanently establish anything the world would hold but one absurdity in each department, for no second one would stand the slightest chance of ever being accepted.

On the general claims of Spiritualism there are two or three preliminary observations that may be made. The first is that if existence beyond the grave be a fact, and if there are actually means of communication between the dead and ourselves, one would have imagined that, considering the many thousands of generations during which the human race has existed, and the myriads of millions of human beings who have died, the fact of a future life should by now be so firmly established as to be beyond the possibility of question. If Spiritualism be true we are dealing with an ever present fact, and with permanent qualities of human nature. But instead of finding this constant fact and these permanent qualities generally recognized, what we find is that the vogue of Spiritualism ebbs and flows, attracting general attention at one moment, and sinking into the quietude of a religious organization the next. This is a phenomenon, on the face of it, in far greater consonance with the existence of an epidemic illusion than aught else.

Second, although what is called Modern Spiritualism dates from only the middle of the nineteenth century, Spiritualism as connoting certain observed phenomena has a much older history, and does, indeed, connect directly with what we know of savage practices. But we also know the facts upon which the beliefs of savages are built, and all of these facts we are now able to explain without the slightest reference to the supernatural or to the belief in a future life. And when we find an unbroken chain between the beliefs of the savage and those of the modern Spiritualist, when we consider that in the history of the race the first explanation of the unusual or the abnormal has always been in terms of the supernatural or the "spiritual," even excluding all question of deliberate fraud, one is no more inclined to accept at its face value the Spiritualistic explanation of what takes place at a modern seance than one is inclined to take the visions of a mediæval monk as proof of his intercourse with a ghostly world. As Mr. Podmore remarks of the celebrated Mrs. Piper, that her mediumship would have been more convincing had it "come to us out of the blue, instead of trailing behind her a nebulous ancestry of magnetic somnambulism, witch-ridden children, and ecstatic nuns," so he says with equal truth of Spiritualism in general: —

> We have still to deal with the same protean figures —vengeful human ghosts, familiar spirits, shaman or wizard, angels from the abyss, devils released from Jewish or mediæval hells, oracles of Olympian deities, spirits of angels and prophets, spirits of earth, air, and fire, spirits of the damned, spirits on furlough

> from purgatory, spirits floating in a Swedenborgian limbo, ghosts of fleas and archangels, decaying astral shells, spirits of the seven celestial spheres, spirits clothed in luminiferous ether—they have been with us since the first syllable of recorded time, and generation after generation they have shaped themselves to suit the changing fashion of the hour, the hidden or hinted hopes of those who put their trust in them (*The Newer Spiritualism*, pp. 296-7).

I wish to stress this aspect of the matter because it throws a very strong light upon what I believe to lie at the root of the observed phenomena. I am convinced that at the foundation of the belief in Spiritualism—and on which tricksters of all kinds have plied their trade—there exists a misunderstanding of abnormal states of mind, varying from the very mildest forms of automatism on the one hand to pronounced pathological states on the other. In no other way can we account for the fact that the next world—about which, if the communications are genuine, there should certainly be some uniformity in the information supplied by those who allege they are living in it—is described by these alleged spirits in such contradictory terms, but always in agreement with the environment in which we ourselves are living. On the Continent it is common for the spirits to assure us that re-incarnation is a fact. In England the information is to the contrary. In Italy it is not unusual for the spirits to profess Atheism; in England a wishy-washy Theism is the rule. The spirit world is all round us, or above the earth, or in the milky way. It is a real and tangible existence to one spirit; it is a creation of the mind to another. The spirits have a vocal language as we have;

they have no vocal language, but communicate by a species of celestial telepathy. Spirits grow, or do not grow, or, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us, they grow both older and younger till they all stop at about thirty years of age, which, curiously enough, is the age at which most of us would like to stop if we could manage it. There is simply no limit to the variety and contradictoriness of the information given to the living by the dead. And one may readily excuse the spirits being unable to decipher the contents of a sealed letter when they cannot make up their minds as to the character of the world in which they claim to be living. All this is puzzling enough so long as we attempt to treat it as a description of an actual place, but it becomes understandable, in both its contemporary and historic relations, when we regard it from the proper point of view.

But while to take these alleged spiritual communications at their face value is absurd, it is equally ridiculous to accept the theory that Spiritualism is no more than the product of deliberate and conscious trickery, the outcome of vulgar tricksters and clever conjurors. That is quite unsatisfactory to anyone who approaches the subject with a first-hand knowledge, and with the necessary acquaintance with abnormal psychology. That there is trickery connected with Spiritualism is so patent that not even its avowed defenders dispute it. There are very few of the well-known public mediums who have not been detected in fraud, and, indeed, the conditions under which public seances are held are favourable to trickery, while the credulity of the majority of those who attend invite it. But the nature of that trickery is

quite another question, and one to which few of those who delight in showing how the trickery is effected appear to have paid much attention. After all, when we have a species of happenings that goes back generation after generation, from ourselves to the primitive savage, there must be something more in it than deliberate and conscious trickery. If mere trickery can be carried on generation after generation, and over so wide an area, practically co-extensive with the human race, the fact of trickery strikes one as being slightly more wonderful than the alleged reality. On the other hand, the fact that all the fundamental phenomena of Spiritualism, trance-mediumship, automatic writing, crystal-gazing, etc., can be seen under conditions where there is not the slightest suggestion of spirit agency, is enough to prove the needlessness of that theory. In short, both the assertion that in Spiritualism we have proof of a future state of existence, and the assertion that the phenomena which are commonly known under the name of Spiritualism are nothing but the outcome of mere trickery, strike one as being elaborate efforts in misdirection, and both exhibit the same want of acquaintance with the actual nature of the facts. Spiritualists know that the theory of fraud will not cover the experience they have in their own homes, and often in their own persons; but those who approach the subject from a genuinely scientific point of view know that there is with Spiritualism no greater evidence of the existence of a future life than there is proof of a hell or heaven in the visions of a mediæval monk.

It is, in fact, good advice for anyone who really wishes to understand Spiritualism, not to permit their

minds to become obsessed with either the fact or the question of conscious fraud. That should be taken for granted in all cases where professional mediumship is in question, and also in many other instances, and then attention should be turned in other directions. For to be on the look out for fraud, and to assume that it is a question of either conscious fraud or communications with the dead, is to play right into the hands of the Spiritualist. The man who enters the seance room looking for fraud and nothing but fraud, is helping to divert attention from the quarter to which it might profitably be directed. Looking in the wrong direction has the natural effect of preventing his looking in the right one. And he imagines that he has protected himself against deception when he has in reality exposed himself to the greatest deception of all—that which comes from entering on the study of a subject without the necessary mental equipment for understanding the matter in hand. Had those who have become devotees of Spiritualism understood what it was with which they were dealing they would never have accepted the Spiritualistic explanation. And had those who have written so much about the frauds of Spiritualism also understood the subject they would have written less, and would have enlightened Spiritualists as to the meaning of what was going on under their eyes. As it is they have helped the Spiritualist by encouraging the delusion that, provided conscious fraud was excluded, there was nothing left but to accept the explanation which Spiritualists favour.

The present position with regard to Spiritualism may be illustrated by noting what has taken place in the

history of religion. To begin with we have the savage's conviction of intercourse with gods and ghosts, based on no better foundation than his ignorance of the meaning of natural processes. Then we have that belief organized into the religions of the world, followed by the continuous interpretation of human feeling and experience in terms of supernaturalism. Finally, we have a number of unscrupulous practitioners deliberately pretending to receive commissions from the spiritual world, with no other object than that of deceiving the people, and just as " mediums " have often enough been provided with all the material of the conjuror's cabinet, so we have with religions, winking Madonnas and bleeding statues as concrete evidence of supernaturalism.

Now, it was a matter of ease to declare the religious idea to be false, and to prove that it was based on a delusion. But much more than that was needed to make the case against religion complete. Merely to say of a man or woman during adolescence that there was here no basis for belief in the action of God was not enough. It left the person chiefly concerned unconvinced. The feelings remained and were so far real. To one ignorant of the effects of fasting, or other forms of self-abuse in breeding illusions, it was folly to denounce the resulting visions as sheer imposture. The evidence for the belief was there before the eyes of the religious believer. If he believed that a man could get into touch with a supernatural world, there was his own misunderstood experience to support his opinion. If he believed that spirits could take possession of the human body, there were before him the facts of epilepsy or insanity. Religion has lived

through the ages, not in virtue of deliberate imposture, although there has been plenty of that mixed up with it , but because in the absence of adequate knowledge there was what appeared to be strong evidence of its truth. This is substantially the position of Spiritualism to-day. There is trickery, conscious and unconscious, in plenty. There is self-deception galore, and we are faced with faked spirit photographs, and all the paraphernalia of deliberate deception. But for one who is converted to Spiritualism by these methods there are a dozen brought to believe in communications with the dead through happenings in their own family circle, and their experinece calls for quite a different kind of explanation. And it is these cases that provide the foundation for the business of the professional trickster just as it was the ignorance of the people that provided the material on which the Churches of the world have worked. Naturally so. It cannot be the many that deceive the few, it must always be the few that deceive the many. We have to do with Spiritualism what we have been able to do with religion—that is, not merely to say that it is false, but to show why people have believed it to be true, what are the facts, real and assumed, upon which it has built, and, finally, to show that so far as they are genuine facts we no more need a spiritual world to explain them than we need the demons of the New Testament to explain the ravings of a lunatic or the struggles of an epileptic.

I am not aiming at going over in detail the mass of so-called evidence that is offered on behalf of Spiritualism. My aim is of a more restricted character. It is that of a brief examination of what one may call the residuum of genuine fact when all of a doubtful or

irrelevant nature has been excluded. And I think it can be shown that this residuum in no wise points to what the Spiritualist believes it indicates.

It is to be borne in mind that the Spiritualist aims at proving that we live after death, and that communication between the dead and the living takes place. Anything that does not prove that is, for him, quite useless. He is not concerned with proving that there exist unknown forces in nature, or that man, as man, possesses unexpected capacities. The truth of each of these propositions is conceivable, but they would not benefit the Spiritualistic theory in the slightest degree. And of the larger part of the evidence which the Spiritualist throws at the head of the sceptic one may safely say that it is utterly irrelevant to the point at issue. When we read accounts of a heavy object being moved round a room without the observers being able to detect how it is done, when we are told that by telepathy people are able to communicate with each other apart from the usual channels of communication, or that certain people, sitting under certain conditions, are able to exude some kind of a force that moves tables or other objects, there is not one of these things separately, nor all of them collectively, that prove existence the other side of the grave. If true, they are wonderful, but the wonderful does not prove the supernatural, nor does the fact that one man can manipulate forces of which the majority of us are ignorant, prove that we live again after death. They prove that we have still many things to learn, and no one but a fool would deny the abstract truth of that proposition. But it is just as well to have a clear idea of what it is that we set out to prove, and how far

the evidence offered serves this end. Not a little help has been given to Spiritualists by the uncritical nature of the arguments brought against them; their opponents evidently believing that they must disprove everything that was offered whether it had any bearing upon the point or not.

Let us assume it as proved that by a number of persons sitting in darkness or in semi-darkness a number of forces, " psychic " or otherwise, are set in motion. In what way can that prove the truth of the Spiritualistic hypothesis? It is part of that hypothesis that whether we are on this side of the grave or the other we are still human beings, neither more nor less. The powers we have here we have there. We are the same persons differently lodged, and John Smith living in " Summerland " only differs from John Smith here as he would living in London and Brighton. And if one human being can " control " another one and set in motion forces that he does not manifest under ordinary conditions, whether one is on this side of the grave or the other, does not seem to make any substantial difference. If, when sitting with another human being, a table begins to waltz round the room, I do not see why it must be due to the spirit of my deceased grandfather rather than to my own influence or that of the other person. If it is not possible in the one case, why is it possible in the other? If a certain result can be achieved by the co-operation of two human beings, one on this and one on the other side of the grave, why cannot the same result be reached by two on this side? In this respect the " proof " of Spiritualism tends to annihilate itself at the moment of achieving success. It is, moreover, being admitted by

declared believers that the evidence which satisfied Spiritualists of a previous generation—men of the standing of Judge Edmonds and Andrew Jackson Davis—would not be satisfactory to-day, because we have a different explanation of the facts that seemed to them to prove spirit intercourse.[1] That is, the facts which these men took as conclusive proof of a future life prove nothing of the kind. In this matter we appear to be moving on the plane where anything unusual or mysterious is at once put to the credit of the supernatural. That has been one of the sources of religious belief from the earliest times, and there is no reason for assuming that the end will be different in the particular case of Spiritualism from what it has been with many other elements of religious belief.

In this respect, too, Spiritualists are not quite playing the game. When the names of eminent men are brought forward in support of the genuineness of certain phenomena the reader is left with the impression—one feels a calculated impression—that these testimonies as to the realities of the happenings imply an acceptance of the Spiritualistic theory. And that is decidedly not the case. Professor Flammarion, in his *Mysterious Psychic Forces,* devotes a whole chapter to a discussion of the various theories put forward to account for the phenomena by those who accept them as genuine, and himself concludes that to explain what takes place, "The hypothesis of spirits of another order than that of human beings does not seem to be necessary" (p. 421). And it may be here

[1] See *Science and a Future Life,* by Dr. J. H. Hyslop, pp. 13-15.

noted that the original theory of possession, that is, that the spirit of the dead person actually inhabits the body of the medium, is now giving place to the theory that the spirit impresses the mind of the medium by a species of spiritual telepathy. This, however, only lands the Spiritualist in another difficulty. On the theory of possession there was an explanation of the Indian talk and the other peculiar patter of the seance room. On the theory of spiritual telepathy this is reduced to an elaborate make-believe. The medium is simply playing a part. And this is, as we shall see later, what most probably takes place. Once more we are witnessing a repetition of what has so often been seen in the history of religion. The world we live in is the same as that in which our savage ancestors lived, but one does not need to deny the existence of the world in order to reject the savage's explanation of it.

But it is not altogether a question of mere testimony, but of the right kind of evidence from the right kind of man. No one questions for a moment the honesty of the eminent men who are cited in support of Spiritualism, it is simply unfortunate that, for the greater part, they should have belonged to the class of eminent men who could not carry conviction on this particular subject. They had not the intimate acquaintance with the class of facts that would throw light upon the phenomena before them, and in science there is no authority, as such, there is only an authority in virtue of a knowledge of the matter under discussion. And where we have the same facts observed by two or more different persons without agreement as to what occurred or its meaning, it is

absurd to speak of that as scientific evidence. It does not fulfil the initial condition of scientific evidence. And of the eminent men who have spoken in favour of Spiritualism the overwhelming majority have been so poorly equipped for the work that they have seldom bothered to get a life history of the mediums with whom they were experimenting—information that was of vital importance to a genuinely scientific understanding of what was going on. Here and there we get the required information, given in a more or less casual manner, as when we learn of the celebrated Eusapia that her first mediumistic manifestations began at the age of puberty, and that while in the trance state " her face flushes.....she courts caresses," the success of her phenomena causes " agreeable and even voluptuous thrills," " her legs and her arms are in a state of marked tension, almost rigid, or even undergo convulsive contractions." These are, as will be seen, illuminating details, and one wishes there were more of them. Had the scientific men who have investigated Spiritualism compiled a life record of the various mediums that came under their observation their conclusions would have been of a more helpful nature than they are at present. As it is, it is almost pathetic to note the elaborate care taken to prevent the fraud of the deliberate trickster, without taking the least precaution against the unconscious deception of personal pathological conditions. And not only were the precautions taken often valueless against deliberate trickery, they were obviously useless in preventing a misunderstanding of what was actually taking place. Worse than being useless, they helped in their turn to promote misunderstanding, as they gave the outside

public the impression that the experiments were conducted under adequate scientific conditions. And that, most decidedly, was not the case.

I am not now writing a history of Spiritualism, or pretending to do more than glance at some important aspects of the subject that are generally overlooked or insufficiently stressed. For that reason I am not dealing with what is known as the physical side of the manifestations—the alleged materializations of spirits, spirit photographs, etc. There are any number of popular works written on that aspect of Spiritualism, and Mr. Frank Podmore, in his various books on the subject, has gone very carefully into the matter.[2] It will suffice to say here that there is not a single one of the phenomena associated with Spiritualism that expert performers have found incapable of producing, and there is hardly a well-known medium who has not at one time or another been detected in trickery, sometimes the fraud of the common trickster, at other times the deception of those who mistake the operations of their own disordered personality for actual objective occurrences.[3] Moreover, the stress laid upon these

[2] See his *History of Spiritualism, Studies in Psychical Research, The Naturalization of the Supernatural, The Newer Spiritualism,* etc.

[3] It is at least suspicious that there has gone on a progressive development in the ways in which these alleged communications with the dead have been carried on. First we have the vogue of crude table-tilting. Then, following exposure after exposure, we find that giving way to other methods. Of course, it may be said that the spirits are gaining greater proficiency in their methods of communication, but it is curious that this is the line of development followed in the history of any deliberate delusion. We have to begin

material manifestations by the critics of Spiritualism, combined with the wonder-loving capacity of the outside public, has given them an altogether undue importance. They are not by any means so common as a mere perusal of the literature of the subject would lead one to assume. I believe it to be the truth that a large majority of Spiritualists have never seen a materialization, or witnessed many phenomena of a material kind, although they are quite willing to take its reality on the testimony of others. It is the facts of their own experience that lead them to believe as they do, and in the absence of other explanations they may be excused accepting them at their face value as proofs of spirit communication. But are they? That is the important question. And one answer to the question is found in the fact that it is possible to parallel these experiences with examples in which there is not the least suggestion of spirit communication.

---

with certain simple methods of deception, and as these become known, more elaborate ones are introduced. It may be that the spirits are becoming more proficient; it may also be that the mediums are becoming more expert.

CHAPTER XI.

SPIRITUALISM—*Continued.*

The essential thing aimed at by the Spiritualist is the establishment of a belief in a future life by providing proof of communication with the dead. Anything that does not do this is, so far as he is concerned, wide of the mark. Moving tables and levitating bodies he is not, as Spiritualist, at all interested in. He values them as proofs that there is " spirit agency " at work, and they serve this purpose with a great many because with the " vulgar " mind a thing that cannot be at once explained may be attributed to anything the operator wishes. Spirit agency has always been a favourite explanation of anything at all puzzling and unusual, and it has held the field until science has come along and reduced the strange phenomenon to a definite category of natural law, and so good-bye to spirit agency. In any case the only thing that will serve the purpose of the Spiritualist is plain and unmistakable communication with the dead. That is why the central fact of Spiritualism has always been the trance. With the exception of table-tilting messages, the alleged communications from the dead are chiefly delivered through a medium in the trance state, either orally or by means of automatic writing.

It is mainly upon the authority of trance utterances that the material manifestations have been taken as products of spirit action, and as action and reaction are equal and opposite, here as elsewhere, the material manifestations have in turn been used to back up the genuineness of trance communications. And the genuineness of what is called the trance may be taken as beyond question—not, be it noted, the genuineness of the Spiritualistic interpretation of the trance state, but the actual occurrence of the state itself.

What, then, is the nature of the trance? The answer to that question opens up one of the more recent chapters in the history of psychology, but it is there for all to read who will. We may commence with the old and the new conception of consciousness. To the old psychology the personal consciousness of each was a single indecomposable thing. Just as the old physicist assumed that air and water were "elements," so the psychologist assumed that in dealing with consciousness we were concerned with a *thing,* something that admitted of no further analysis, and that all we had to do was to chronicle its qualities and movements. But just as in the physical sciences the " elements " have had a somewhat disastrous history, one after another being resolved into something else, so consciousness turns out to be not a single indecomposable entity, but, to use William James' admirable expression, " an affair of relations." The personal consciousness of each of us turns out to be a composite structure, a string of experiences which become integrated into a definite whole, is slowly built up, contains many unsuspected possibilities, and is capable of more or less rapid, and more or less complete and permanent

disintegration. This is the deliberate conviction of a school of psychologists that is rapidly growing in number and authority; it is an endorsement of that for which the really scientific materialist has for long contended, and the researches of the psycho-analytic school serve to give it a very practical demonstration. "For twenty years past," said the late William James, "I have mistrusted 'consciousness' as an entity; for seven or eight years past I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded." [1] "Consciousness" is the expression of a relation, not the name of a thing.[2]

If what has been said be accepted as even approximately true, we must conceive of the personality of each being built up in a manner analogous to that in which the nervous system itself has been built up. Just as we have the capacities of the separate cell being built up into nerves and nerve centres, each with its appropriate reflexes, the whole being organized to form that largest group of responses which we imply when we speak of an organism, so we have the different experiences, or awarenesses, built up and organized into the personality which we know as

[1] *Essays in Radical Empiricism,* p. 3.

[2] The use of the word "consciousness" helps to give the unwary reader the notion of a thing instead of a relation. That will be avoided if we bear in mind that consciousness is no more than "awareness." To be conscious of a thing is to be aware of it, and the general term "consciousness" covers the totality of things of which we are from moment to moment aware.

Smith, Jones, or Robinson.[3] Our consciousness is the reflection of a unified whole, and so long as it

[3] "Every nerve cell anatomically considered is a complete unit. The processes coming out from the different nerve cells do not fuse with processes coming out from other nerve cells, but rather interlace and come in contact like the electrodes of a battery in forming the electric circuit.....The association of nerve cells is not organic, but functional..... The association of cells forms a group whose physiological function has concomitant mental activity.....By means of association fibres the groups are organized into systems, the systems into communities, the communities into clusters, the clusters into constellations, and each of the higher complex aggregates is more feebly organized by less stable association fibres.

Now, if the constitution of the individual mind be made up of many subordinate minds, or of individuals less complex in character, we may well conceive the formation of secondary individualities or of secondary personalities in the various states of mental dissociation and degeneration. Under the influence of hurtful stimuli, be they toxic or traumatic in their nature, the first stage of functional degeneration may give rise to functional dissociation along different lines. Different individualities, often parasitic in character, may arise, develop and even stifle the primary personality. There may be as many different personalities, parasitic or secondary, as there are possible combinations of and disaggregations of psycho-physiological aggregates. There may, therefore, be different forms of secondary consciousness or of multiple personality. There may be a simultaneous character or one of alternation. The personalities may appear side by side, or they may appear alternately. The play of personalities may be of a dramatic character, the characters and personalities appearing on the scene like so many actors, the whole appearing as a play of so many different persons."—Dr. Boris Sidis, *Multiple Personality*, pp. 52-3.

functions as a whole we have expressed the normal personality with which we may happen to be acquainted. The " ego " of each person is thus a complex of experiences, or more correctly a group of complexes, each of which may have its own peculiar reactions to the environment. But a very little reflection will show that the theatre of consciousness displays at any one time but a very small proportion of the total experiences of which we have been conscious. Some of these are so near to consciousness that they are continually appearing and disappearing, and are capable of being revived whenever we need them. But there are others which we find it much more difficult to revive, such as meet us in what we call lapses of " memory "—one of those phrases which help so conveniently to cover our ignorance of what actually occurs. And there are others which we cannot recall at all, which we have completely forgotten. But, and it is very important to remember this, there is probably nothing, certainly very little, that is ever completely lost. It is buried, but not beyond the possibility of resurrection. This has been proved in thousands of experiments, and comes out with peculiar force in experiments with hypnotic subjects. Their presence is shown, too, in such phenomena as automatic writing—foolishly taken as communications from the spirit world —and in crystal gazing. It is these buried experiences recalled from that world of the unconscious, or sub-conscious, which in the hands of the new psycho-analytic school have become so fruitful an instrument of psychological investigation, and have borne such excellent results in the treatment of nervous disorders. This " unconscious " is not merely there,

it is always making its presence felt. In fact, as Wundt puts it: "Ultimate psychic processes show that the unconscious is the theatre of the most important mental phenomena. The conscious is always conditioned by the unconscious." Our conscious mental life bears about the same relation to the total mental life as the ripple on the surface of a stream does to its depth.

The actions of the normal individual thus show a complete synthesis, a perfect association. Perhaps the word "ideal" would be more appropriate than "normal," for, as a matter of fact, even in what we call normal life the synthesis is very often broken. Of this Freud, in his *Psycho-pathology of Everyday Life,* gives numerous examples. None of these need detain us here, except to note that these breaks create what is known as dissociation. To make the idea of dissociation plain we may picture consciousness as constituting a smoothly flowing stream of "awareness," but accompanied by a deeper stream below consciousness. So long as what rises into consciousness is easily assimilated, there is no break, and the personality remains without noticeable change. But if the emergence of the stream below consciousness be of an abrupt character, or of a kind that refuses to be assimilated, the intruding group of complexes act, so to speak, on their own account, and we have a fresh personality showing itself. One can only present a rough and ready picture of the nature of dissociation, as in the present state of our knowledge the machinery of the process is not quite clear. It may be that it is due to the dropping of certain of the completely synthesised states, which leaves the others free to

function, or it may leave them free to form new combinations. But the fact of dissociation is plain. Forgetting a name is what one may call a very normal case of dissociation. We try with all our might to recall it, but fail. And it is worthy of special note that the more we try to recover it, generally, the less we succeed. Normally, we get it better by a process of abstraction, which may be taken to represent an example of ordinary automatism. Substantially, cases of dissociation may be described as the carrying on of mental processes resulting in definite action, of which the normal personality is usually unconscious. At any rate, the fact remains that under certain conditions there may arise spontaneously, or there may be induced under hypnotism (suggestion) a manifestation of character which differs in a more or less decided manner from the one with which we are acquainted normally.

A classical example of dissociation is that of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, as given by Professor James (*Principles of Psychology*, vol. I. pp. 391-3). Ansel Bourne was brought up as a carpenter, but at the age of thirty became an itinerant preacher. During a great part of his life he suffered from headaches, and had experienced a few fits of unconsciousness lasting an hour or less. He was known and respected for his high character. On January 17, 1887, he left home to draw some money from the bank for the purpose of paying off a mortgage. He then disappeared, and all attempts to find him failed. But about three months later a man at Norristown, Pennsylvania, who called himself A. J. Brown, and had rented a small shop for carrying on a fruit and confectionery trade, woke

up in a fright and asked the people around to tell him where he was. He said that his name was Ansel Bourne, that he belonged to Providence, and the last he remembered was drawing some money from the bank. Enquiries established the truth of the story and Mr. Bourne returned home. There the matter, for a time, ended. The next thing was to discover what had become of the " Brown " personality. For a time all attempts in this direction failed. But some three years later Professor James induced Mr. Bourne to submit to hypnotism. The " Brown " memory soon manifested itself. In spiritualistic jargon, the " control " had returned. The second personality was ignorant of Mr. Bourne, but he told the experimenters all he did, and they were thus able to reconstruct the whole story from the time that Mr. Bourne drew the money from the bank to his coming to himself in the small shop in Norristown. The whole thing, says James, " was prosaic enough, and the Brown personality appears to be a rather shrunken, dejected, and amnesic extract of Mr. Bourne himself." It is clear that we have a quite naturalistic, even materialistic, explanation of this case, and also that in the hands of a confirmed Spiritualist we should have had a most circumstantial account of the way in which someone from " Summerland " had controlled Mr. Bourne.

Cases of dual and multiple personality are very numerous, and they well illustrate all, or nearly all, the phenomena that we meet in connection with trance mediumship. They also throw light upon the question of the trickery which is so often manifested in connection therewith, without this trickery being the

product of the medium's normal consciousness. One instance of the pranks of this secondary personality has been given in the case of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, but the case of "Helene Smith," as described by Professor Flourney, illustrates another aspect of the same phenomenon. Helene Smith had been a quiet, dreamy sort of a child, having occasional visions, but in other respects appearing quite normal. Just before she was thirty years of age she was induced to attend a spiritualistic circle and soon displayed all the characteristic phenomena of mediumship. She was "controlled" by a number of famous personages, but her most striking case occurred when her spirit travelled to Mars. She gave Professor Flourney a very circumstantial account of the inhabitants of the planet, their habits, dwellings, etc., and even went to the length of constructing the elements of a Martian language. It was the kind of performance that would have sent Sir Arthur Conan Doyle into ecstasies of admiration, and would have been more convincing even than his photographs of faries. Unfortunately for the spiritualistic theory, Professor Flourney was made of different stuff. He analysed the case at great length, side by side with an examination of the subject's history. As a result he was able to show that all Helene Smith was doing was reproducing by means of automatic writing the products of her reading and day dreaming for years past. Even the Martian language was modelled, as might be expected, on the French tongue. Had the subject been English the Martians would have spoken a different language. It should be pointed out that there was no suggestion of conscious imposture on the part of the normal Helene Smith. The investigator

was simply dealing with the tricky, dramatizing, secondary personality.

Hypnotic subjects provide numerous cases of dual personality, and, indeed, hypnotism is one of the commonest methods of tapping the whole region of the unconscious. Professor Janet's case, Leonie, is a well-known one in this connection. In her normal self she is described as a serious and rather sad person, very slow in her movements, and timid in manner. When hypnotised an entirely different character is manifested. She is gay, noisy, and restless, and is described as possessing an enormous number of recollections of people and places. In this state Professor Janet was able to distinguish three distinct personalities, described as Leonie 1, Leonie 2, and Leonie 3. Finally, we may cite the celebrated case of "Miss Beauchamp," as described by Dr. Morton Prince.[4] Miss Beauchamp came to Dr. Prince for professional treatment in 1898, and in the course of his experience of the case Dr. Prince was able to clearly define and to trace the devolopment of three distinct personalities. Each of these appeared to live its own life, with its own cluster of memories, and each showed on its re-appearance the persistency of characteristics such as is manifested by the ordinary medium when the "controls" show themselves. There was not in this case the slightest suggestion of spirit intercourse. The manifesting personality simply referred to itself in the same way as does a normal personage, but it is quite clear that had this case been in the hands of a Spiritualist

[4] *The Dissociation of a Personality; A Biographical Study in Abnormal Psychology*, 1910.

we should have had all the usual jargon inflicted on us. In a further study of the case, contributed to *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology* for September, 1920, Dr. Prince goes into a detailed examination of the symptoms, tracing the origin of these secondary personalities, and from a study of Miss Beauchamp's life decides that they were a reversion to the complexes and reactions of her early years, a recrudescence of sentiments long suppressed, with the addition of perceptions and thoughts that had gathered round them. The building up of these personalities is discussed, and not the least interesting part of the article is the information that he eventually healed the psychological fracture, and that the intruding characters were laid to rest.

It is not necessary to further multiply cases. They are all marked by certain broad features. To begin with, there is, in the absence of suggestion from those around, no pretence on the part of the secondary personality that it is anything but what it is. But there is a great readiness to take suggestions and to act on them, and there is a carrying on from one appearance to the next of the experience gained. In relation to the subject's normal power there is considerable dramatic talent, which enables it to act up to the character it takes on, but always in terms of previous knowledge. That is why we are quite certain that some of the Red Indian spirits we have come across have never sat round a camp fire, and that the philosophers we have conversed with would have greatly benefitted by attendance at a course of popular University Extension lectures. Next, the secondary personality emerges and is re-absorbed into the main stream of conscious-

ness, or suppressed, a phenomenon that is quite in accord with the theory of dissociation, but hardly in line with that of Spiritualism. There is also, it is important to note, during these manifestations an excessive sensibilty of certain of the senses (hyperæsthesia) which may enable the subject to detect sights or sounds not appreciated under normal conditions, and at the same time there may be a dulling of certain senses (amnesia) which leaves the person incapable of reacting to special stimuli. These are also well marked symptoms of the hypnotic state. Finally, there are pronounced automatisms, the better known and the ones with which we are now chiefly concerned being automatic writing and crystal gazing.[5]

[5] One set of conditions making for dissociation is thus described by Dr. Prince : " Particular emotional states, like fear or anxiety, or general mental distress, have the tendency to disintegrate the mental organization in such a way that the normal associations become severed or loosened. Thus it happens that a mental shock like that of an accident, or an alarming piece of news, produces a dissociation of the mind known as a state of hysteria or ' traumatic neurosis.' Such states are characterized by persisting loss of sensation, paralysis, amnesia, and the so-called stigmata, which are now recognized to be manifestations of the dissociation of sensory, motor, or other images from the main stream of consciousness. A doubling of consciousness is thus brought about. The dissociated images may still be capable of functioning, more or less independently of the waking consciousness, and when they do, so-called automatic phenomena (hallucinations, tics, spasms, contractures, etc.) result. Sometimes the mental dissociation produces a complete loss of memory for long periods of the subject's life; when this is the case we have the fundamental basis for alternating personalities, of which this study will offer many examples.....Finally, when the neurasthenic systems have been repeatedly awakened by an

Now, to anyone who reflects on what has been said, it will be plain that we have here a substantial explanation of the phenomena that meet us in trance mediumship. It will also explain why so few medical men or psychologists who are familiar with the proper lines of investigation give their support to the Spiritualistic hypothesis. I may well put the position in a rather lengthy quotation from Professor James:—

> In "mediumships" or "possession" the invasion and the passing away of the secondary state are both relatively abrupt, and the duration of the state is relatively short, *i.e.*, from a few minutes to a few hours. Whenever the secondary state is well developed no memory for aught that happened during it remains after the primary consciousness comes back. The subject during the secondary consciousness speaks, writes, or acts as if animated by a foreign person and gives his history. In old times the foreign "control" was usually a demon, and is so now in communities that favour that belief. With us he gives himself out at the worst for an Indian or other grotesquely speaking but harmless personage. Usually he purports to be the spirit of a

emotion, they form a habit, or what I have called an association neurosis" (*Dissociation*, p. 22). Again, "It was shown that in hypnosis the memories of past experiences were associated among themselves, systematized, and preserved, as if in the memory of a second personality. Janet, experimenting still further.....showed that the lost memories could be recovered in the waking state by the process of abstraction and automatic writing. The memorial images, therefore, were not obliterated, but were merely dissociated from the waking personality. It required only a device to awaken the systematized memories, dissociated from the personal consciousness" (p. 259).

dead person known or unknown to those present, and the subject is then what we call a "medium." Mediumistic possession in all its grades seems to form a perfectly natural special type of alternate personality, and the susceptibility to it in some form is by no means an uncommon gift in persons who have no other obvious nervous anomaly. The phenomena are very intricate, and are only just beginning to be studied in a proper scientific way. The lowest phase of mediumship is automatic writing, and the lowest grade of that is where the subject knows what words are coming, but feels impelled to write them as if from without. Then comes writing unconsciously, even while engaged in reading or talk. Inspirational speaking, playing on musical instruments, etc., also belong to the relatively lower phases of possession, in which the normal self is not excluded from conscious participation in the performance, though their initiative seems to come from elsewhere. In the highest phase the trance is complete, the voice, language, and everything are changed, and there is no after memory whatever till the next trance comes. One curious thing about trance utterances is their generic similarity in different individuals. The "control" here in America is either a grotesque, slangy, and flippant personage.....or if he ventures on higher flights, he abounds in a curiously vague optimistic philosophy-and-water, in which phrases about spirit, harmony, beauty, law, progression, development, etc., keep recurring. It seems exactly as if one author composed more than half of the trance messages, no matter by whom they are uttered. Whether all subconscious selves are peculiarly susceptible to a certain stratum of the *Zeitgeist,* and get their inspiration from it, I know not, but this is obviously the case with the secondary selves which have developed

> in spiritualistic circles. There the beginnings of the medium trance are indistinguishable from the effects of hypnotic suggestion. The subject assumes the role of a medium simply because opinion expects it of him under the conditions which are present; and carries it out with a feebleness or a vivacity proportionate to his histrionic gifts (*Principles of Psychology,* vol. i. pp. 393-4).

In his *Science and a Future Life,* Dr. Hyslop, while giving a general support to the spiritualistic theory, admits that the " fundamental point " in which the assumed " control " fails to establish itself is its inability to give facts which will prove the identity of the supposed communicating spirit. " It may," he says, " invent incidents to stimulate this effect, but it fails in anything but guessing, chance coincidence, fishing, and response to suggestion." Anyone with experience of mediums will endorse this, and if the person to whom the communications are given were to remain perfectly silent while the medium is talking, sitting in perfect quietude, without any physical contact with the medium, the failure to give exact information would be more striking than it is. And Dr. Hyslop adds that—

> There is such an enormous mass of phenomena that is undoubtedly the result of secondary personality, and so many more that are explicable by it, that the medium who gives evidence of the supernormal is very rare.....The layman is not aware of the tremendous difficulties involved in the quantity and quality of the matter that is produced and producible by secondary personality, that can neither be attributed to spirits nor demands explanation by fraud.

I can quite agree with Dr. Hyslop in this, and also when he says that a secondary personality can no more inculpate a medium with fraud than can a somnambulist or dreamer. I have tried to make it plain that it is on this point that the ordinary critic of spiritualism goes so woefully astray. But in this matter the uninformed character of his criticism is quite equalled by the want of knowledge of the majority of spiritualists whose conviction of the truth of Spiritualism rests upon exactly the kind of evidence which, in truth, proves nothing of the kind. It is quite certain that if the mass of spiritualists were aware that the phenomena with which they are familiar in their own homes are explainable on the lines above indicated, and that the messages which they receive, and which are really independent of the medium's normal consciousness, were no more than an illustration of those automatisms which belong to the dissociated state, the number of professing spiritualists would not be greater than the believers in a flat earth.

I may take to illustrate this the case of the celebrated medium, Mrs. Piper, and her "control," Dr. Phinuit, who figured so largely in Sir Oliver Lodge's experience. According to the account given by Dr. Phinuit he was, when on earth, a doctor, born about 1790 in Marseilles. He studied medicine there and also at "Metz, in Germany." He married but left no children. One would have thought that in this case it might have been possible to have established some proof of his actual existence. But although invited over and over again to prove his identity, he has never been able to do so. On the other hand, his knowledge of French appears to be limited to a few common

phrases; he does not know the Latin or French names of the few drugs he prescribed through Mrs. Piper, and when pressed he became uncertain as to whether he was really born at Marseilles, or whether his name might not be Alæn instead of Phinuit—this latter was the result of a suggestion from Dr. Hodgson. It is not surprising that Dr. Hyslop comes to the conclusion that Dr. Phinuit must be treated as a creation of Mrs. Piper's secondary consciousness, particularly as the knowledge of French and of drugs displayed does not appear beyond the medium's capacity. And Sir Oliver Lodge, with a very evident desire to find Dr. Phinuit a genuine existence, is yet forced to conclude that he "may or may not be a phase of Mrs. Piper's existence" (*The Survival of Man*, 5th ed., p. 262). It is something to have got so far. It is an advance to have got the fact of these spirits being no more than a product of the medium as a recognized possibility. From a possibility we may advance to a probability, and then to a certainty. That is the normal way of development from superstition to science. We have seen the same thing in the case of witchcraft, where we had first the genuineness of witches asserted, then a discussion as to fraud *versus* delusion, and finally, the establishment of its real nature in terms of nervous derangement and the play of the social environment.

The important thing to note is that once this secondary personality has shown itself, it can be watched in the act of elaboration. Thus, in one of Janet's cases, the subject, making no claim whatever to be a discarnate spirit, accepted the name of "Blanche" from the operator. After that it acted as though the name belonged to her, building up a

character from hints and suggestions supplied. Again, Ribot in his *Diseases of Memory* gives us the case of a servant girl who every evening fancied herself to be a bishop, of a poor servant who imagined himself to be a millionaire, and in each case the normal and the abnormal personality were quite independent of each other. Those who have attended many circles must have also come across Irish spirits who lived up to the medium's conception of the way in which Irishmen lived and talked, or of sailors who were never seen out of a cheap magazine or off the stage of a theatre. Some years ago there were quite a large number of Red Indian controls. Why there should be a surplus of Red Indian spirits ready to communicate it is difficult to see, but when we remember that modern Spiritualism came to this country from America the mystery begins to approach solution. The creation of these stage characters received an amusing illustration in the case of Mrs. Piper, who not only received a communication from George Eliot, but also from *Adam Bede*. Novelists have often been complimented in creating characters that live, but Marian Evens is the first who has ever created one that has come back again from the next world to deliver a message.

A word or two needs to be said on the subject of automatic writing and kindred phenomena. Automatic writing is one of the commonest accompaniments of dissociation, and, indeed, in an elementary form is so common that it appears in connection with those who would hardly deserve to be called abnormal. A great many people with a pencil in their fingers if they allow their hand to rest on a piece of paper will commence to

make marks with the pencil without their being very much alive to what they are doing. And a little practice will enable them to write sentences with as much detachment as a regular performer on the piano will run through a tune while his mind is consciously engaged in some disconnected mental operation. And as the abnormal is never more than an extension of the normal, we may see here one of the simplest indications of dissociation. It is also noticable that those who are advanced in the art of automatic writing have all, so far as the recorded cases go, commenced by very tentative efforts, advancing from a mere undecipherable scrawl to regular and related sentences. Mrs. Verrall, a lady of whose honesty there is not, I think, the least question, tells us that before she took to automatic writing she had for long indulged in crystal gazing, and had published a series of observations on her experience. She was thus in the habit of tapping her unconscious self, that reservoir of buried memories and experiences. She commenced her efforts at automatic writing by sitting regularly with a pencil between her fingers. For some time nothing happened beyond the fact that she would unconsciously trace some words of the book she was reading. Then she began to write sentences in Latin, at first without any general sense, but more connectedly as she proceeded. She followed this up by writing in Greek and Latin, being well acquainted with both languages. But in no case was there anything written that could be said to be outside the range of her knowledge, past or present. And that is the case with all dependable cases of automatic writing with which I am acquainted. The more complete the investigation is the more definite becomes

the evidence that the writer is simply tapping the store of past experiences which he or she possesses.

A good illustration of what has been said above is given in Dr. Wilfrid Lay's *Man's Unconscious Spirit* (1921), pp. 312-14. In this case a young lady began with the Ouija board. After getting a number of messages of no particular importance she enquired who was the intelligence controlling. " Rob Taylor " was the reply. He also said that he lived at the Yorktown Hotel. Miss X called at the hotel, and much to her surprise found out that they knew him. Asking for further proof of this spirit's existence she was told to look in a dark corner of the room and saw a tall figure with a soft hat and Van Dyke beard. She next went to a friend of Taylor's, who showed her some portraits of him, and she was able to pick out the picture of the man she had seen. Later the " spirit " gave her instructions to go to a chemist and get a certain powder with which to clean a copper tray. It is called, said the automatic message, " Liv—" the rest of the name could not be read. Calling at the chemist the assistant recalled the fact that Rob Taylor was in the habit of getting a preparation called Liver of Sulphur. Here then, was an accumulation of proofs. Miss X said that she did not know Rob Taylor, yet she picked out his picture, after seeing the vision of him, and got from the chemist the name of the powder he was in the habit of using. It was a case over which a man like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would go into raptures, and the unscientific opponent of Spiritualism would be equally ready with stories of fraud or information derived through some Spiritualistic Information Bureau.

The real explanation lay in quite a different direction. She was induced to submit to hypnotization in order to further probe the matter. Under hypnosis she recalled three separate incidents which she had completely forgotten, and which threw a vivid light on the whole subject. First, there was the reading in a newspaper of the death of Rob Taylor, which gave his portrait, stated that he was an art worker, and mentioned that he lived in the Yorktown Hotel. The second resurrected memory was that of being in the Yorktown Hotel to dinner and noticing in the lobby a striking looking man with soft hat and Van Dyke beard. On asking who it was she was told it was Rob Taylor. The third memory was that of some copper work being done at school, and that one of the chemicals used was Liver of Sulphur. As Dr. Lay says, " The automatic writing was thus entirely explained. Every bit of information that she got from the ' spirit ' and that was so dramatically corroborated was in her own unconscious mental storehouse, and was released through her automatic writing. Every bit of it was accounted for. Among other things, Dr. Q looked for and found the very newspaper account of Rob Taylor's death."

Crystal gazing comes under the same general head. Here, again, we normally practise it in the species of mental abstraction by the aid of which we attempt to recover some forgotten episode. But a single example from Dr. Coriat's *Abnormal Psychology* must suffice here. He says: —

> One day I had occasion to refer to some notes which I had made in the course of preparation for a certain technical paper. Prolonged search failed to discover

these notes, although I distinctly remembered having made these notes on a particular kind of blue paper. It then occurred to me that perhaps it would be interesting to see if by means of crystal gazing I could find any trace of the lost notes. The result was distinctly interesting and successful. I distinctly saw myself in the crystal, sitting at my desk, and caught myself in the act of tearing up these particular notes in connection with some other data which I had finished using, and throwing the pieces into the waste-paper basket. A search in the basket discovered the lost and torn notes, which I was able to piece together. Now the tearing of these notes was evidently an absent-minded act; and yet an act which was fully preserved in the unconscious and later fully reproduced through the technical device of crystal gazing.

There is no need to elaborate. I am only outlining a subject, not exhausting it. I have said enough to show that there is not the slightest need to assume the action of departed spirits to account for what meets us in Spiritualistic circles. Mental pathologists have for long been familiar with the genuine part of what occurs, and for the rest, the exposure of the many acts of deliberate trickery is enough. I will only add here that those who wish to read a convincing and detailed account of the evolution of a medium would do well to study closely a most illuminating chapter in C. G. Jung's *Analytic Psychology,* where in the course of about one hundred pages he describes both the development and decay of a medium under the title of " The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena." [6]

[6] The literature bearing on this subject is very great, but I

I am bringing this chapter to a close by a few random, but I hope pertinent, considerations of the Spiritualistic theory in the light of what has already been said. The triviality of the alleged communications received from the next world has been often commented on, and justly so. Apart from the value of the proof they would give, if genuine, of the existence of another world, I do not know of a single communication that has ever been given that has been worth the trouble of receiving. There is much talk in Spiritualistic circles of progress and development, but if we are to go by the talk of the supposed spirits it is altogether non-existent. If one will take up any of the published volumes of spirit communications from famous people whose works we have, the striking thing about them is their extreme inanity. In a work before me,[7] there are contained fifty-six communications from men and women such as George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, G. H. Lewes, Dickens, De Quincey, Gambetta, Darwin, etc., and one is aghast at the deterioration that has set in since they left this

would suggest to those who have a desire to follow the subject further the following. First read a valuable little work by Dr. Hart, *The Psychology of Insanity,* published by the Cambridge University Press. Then, not necessarily in the order named, *Abnormal Psychology,* by I. Coriat; *Multiple Personality,* by Boris Sidis; *The Psychology of Suggestion,* same author; *The Newer Spiritualism,* by F. Podmore; Freud's *Psychopathology of Every-day Life; Freud's Theories of the Neuroses,* by Dr. E. Hitschmann; *Papers on Psycho-Analysis,* by Dr. Jones; *The Freudian Wish,* by E. B. Holt, and *Spiritualism and the New Psychology,* by Dr. Millais Culpin.

[7] *The Next World: Fifty-six Communications from Eminent Historians, Authors, etc., through Mrs. Susan G. Horn,* 1890.

world. They all write in the same tone, they all make use of much the same expressions, and not one of them seems able to dictate a sentence that is above the capacity of a Sunday-school teacher. The dead level of mediocrity is appalling. When they died they not only stopped growing, they must also have stopped thinking. The great scientist here makes no discoveries there, beyond meaningless chatter about unknown forces. The historian throws no light on any of the subjects he debated so hotly while on earth, and which he might so easily settle by consulting the principal parties concerned. In the whole history of Spiritualism it is left for the people on earth to make the discoveries, and for the spirits to indulge in columns of useless verbiage about the greatness of the human mind—and disprove it in themselves.

The Spiritualistic explanation of this curious fact that the communications are conditioned by the mentality of the medium only adds to the absurdity. It says little for the mentality of the average medium if the messages received represent the limits of their brain power. Moreover, if the spirits can move the hands of a medium so as to transmit a message of which he is unconscious, or cause him to write in an unknown tongue, or to write about matters unknown to him, why cannot mediums write about matters of scientific or historic interest that are unknown to them? After all, it is the formation of a series of letters that is important here, not the sense of the message conveyed. It is a matter of complete indifference whether the message that is tapped out on a typewriter is sense or nonsense. The keys will register equally well. And why does not that hold

good with regard to the medium who stands to the spirits exactly as my typewriter stands to me? The results are quite inconsistent with the theory of Spiritualism; they are quite consistent with the theory I have been describing. It is again in accordance with the facts of morbid psychology, but difficult to reconcile with the Spiritualistic theory, why mediums should usually have a constant control or a very limited number. If they are expressions of the medium's sub-consciousness this is what we should expect, otherwise it would seem that with so many billions of departed spirits there should be endless variety in the visitors who return. In this connection we may note the suggestibility of the medium. In the case of "Dr. Phinuit," suggestion after suggestion was taken up and repeated in subsequent sittings. In my own experience I have noticed how receptive are both the mediums and the cases of dissociation that I have come across. This is also pointed out by Dr. Maxwell who, in his *Metapsychical Phenomena,* remarks that he has seen a medium who professes that an actual spirit was controlling her, and at another time resolves the spirit into an impersonal force. This will explain why those who are experimenting with mediums so often get what they are expecting. Mr. Podmore properly remarks that "automatic utterances, and especially the trance utterances, show all the characteristics of automatic utterances generally, incoherence, vagueness, ambiguity, evasiveness." Once more we fall into line with those abnormal states on which the whole thing seems to hang.

Another thing overlooked by the Spiritualist is that an explanation which is to be accepted by anyone with a

due regard to scientific procedure, must cover all the facts and not merely a selected few. Now, assuming that the Spiritualistic explanation covers all those cases where the medium is right, what are we to do with those cases where the medium is demonstrably wrong? When, to take one instance out of many, the medium describes correctly the appearance of the spirit of someone who is dead, that is to be taken as proof that the dead live again. But when the medium describes as dead someone who is still living, what then? Clearly the explanation that the thing seen is a genuinely objective existence will not fit both cases. And if not both, why either? Why may it not be that we are dealing in both cases with suggestion or guessing, or a combination of mistakes? The irrelevancy, even the absurdity, of the assurance by either the medium or the medium's friends that she is speaking of things that are beyond her knowledge will be realized when it is remembered that it is precisely because these things are beyond the medium's memory that they take the form they do. It has been shown over and over again that an experience once gained is seldom lost beyond the possibility of revivability. We are all of us continually running up against the sense of having experienced a thing previously without being able to locate time or place. In the majority of cases these experiences are not of a very striking kind, but, here again, the normal shades very gradually into the abnormal, and in the qualities displayed by the medium we have only an extension of those possessed by the ordinary human being. And there is always the co-operation of pure delusion and illusion.

The question of deliberate fraud is not at this point

of great moment. Indeed, to lead the discussion that way helps rather than hinders the Spiritualist, since it draws a red herring across the track by turning attention in the wrong direction. It is not at all difficult for the Spiritualist who knows his case to prove that the theory of fraud will not cover all the cases, and he is thus able to leave his hearers or readers with the confused feeling that there is, after all, something in it. And so there is, but not what the Spiritualist believes is there. One may put it that the critic has been right in suspecting trickery, but it was not of necessity the trickery of the normal personality. As Jung says, "The more consciousness becomes dissociated, the greater becomes the plasticity of the dream situation, the less becomes the amount of conscious lying" (*Analytic Psychology*, p. 71), and if what has been said is correct it is perfectly idle to accuse the normal personality of deliberate deception on account of things done during a period of dissociation. We have to continually bear in mind the trickiness of the secondary consciousness, its capacity for acting up to a part that has been suggested to it, and the abnormal sensitiveness to certain sounds or sights that exists. We do, indeed, need to be constantly on our guard against trickery, but we also need to be awake to the class of trickery against which we are to guard ourselves.

As already said, I have purposely left the case of the deliberate swindler on one side. My aim has been to show that after eliminating him, or her, and taking what remains as genuine phenomena, there is not the least evidence here for the belief in a future state of existence. The facts upon which the majority of

Spiritualists depend to prove their belief in a future life I think I may claim to have shown can be explained in terms of abnormal psychology. Unfortunately, says Flammarion, " a large number of Spiritualists prefer not to go to the bottom of things, or analyze anything, but to be the dupes of their own impressions. They resemble certain worthy women who tell their beads while believing that they have before them Saint Agnes or Saint Filomena." Spiritualists are for the most part the victims of their own " will to believe," and decline to learn the lesson that experience offers them. When hypnotism began we had it explained in terms of some occult hypnotic fluid, or some magnetic influence, or some mysterious power was supposed to " flow " from the one person to another. More careful examination of the facts showed that it was simple suggestion, and the " occult " disappeared save from the repertory of quacks. Or, if I may use my previous illustration, we are in the position with regard to Spiritualism that our ancestors were with regard to demoniacal possession. Or, again, there were the visions of mediæval saints and mystics. These were real to them, and upon their experience the faith of others was built. Or, in the case of witchcraft, we had from the accused people themselves circumstantial accounts of their experience with devils just as we have to-day the experiences of " mediums " with the denizens of the next world. The differences between all these cases is one of time and environment. In other respects they are identical. And the end to these things came when science took these psychological facts in hand and gave them a rational and a natural explanation. That is where we are, so far as a

large number of people are concerned, with Spiritualism to-day. There is the same substratum of fact distorted by misunderstanding into proof of an impossible life beyond the grave. There is the same fight against an explanation of it in terms of known forces, the same attempt to interpret the unusual, or the ill-understood, in terms of a disguised supernaturalism. As with other forms of religious belief Spiritualism is in this respect true to itself and to type. It can trace an ancestry that carries it right back to the stage of primitive savagery, where we see the same species of misunderstanding at work. That it is so, and that Spiritualism can claim so many supporters to-day offers but one more proof, if any were needed, that our boasted advance has only scratched the surface of things, and that careful scientific thinking, especially where religion is concerned, still remains one of the rarest of mental endowments.

Works by CHAPMAN COHEN.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. Cloth Bound, with tasteful Cover Design. Price 5s., postage 4d.

THEISM OR ATHEISM? The Great Alternative. Bound in Full Cloth, Gilt Lettered. Price 5s., postage 3d.

RELIGION AND SEX. Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development. Price 6s., postage 9d.

DETERMINISM OR FREE-WILL? In Paper Cover, 1s. 9d., postage 2d. Half-Cloth, 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

CREED AND CHARACTER. The Influence of Religion on Racial Life. Price 7d., postage 1½d.

DOES MAN SURVIVE DEATH? Is the Belief Reasonable? Verbatim Report of a Discussion between Horace Leaf and Chapman Cohen. Price 7d., postage 1d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY. With a Chapter on the Relation of Christianity to the Labour Movement. Fully Documented with Two Plates and Portrait. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY. The Subjection and Exploitation of a Sex. An Anthropological and Historical Inquiry. Fully Documented. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

THE PARSON AND THE ATHEIST. A Friendly Discussion on Religion and Life between Rev. the Hon Edward Lyttelton, D.D., and Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES. Price 3d., postage 3d.

GOD AND MAN. An Essay in Common Sense and Natural Morality. Price 3d., postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

BLASPHEMY. A Plea for Religious Equality. By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 3d., postage 1d.

MODERN MATERIALISM. A Candid Examination. By WALTER MANN. Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d.; Paper Cover, 2s.; postage 2d.

GOD-EATING. A Study in Christianity and Cannibalism. By J. T. LLOYD. Price 6d., postage 1½d.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MYTHICAL CHRIST. By GERALD MASSEY. Price 6d., postage 1½d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians. By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL. Cloth Bound. Price 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

THE RUINS: A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires. By C. F. VOLNEY. Price 5s., postage 3d.

VOLTAIRE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY. A Collection of all the Articles bearing on Religion. Unabridged. Vol. I. Price 1s. 3d., postage 1½d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. With Historical Preface and Notes. By G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER. Price 6d., postage 1d.

CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. By G. W. FOOTE. Price 2d., postage 1d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. FOOTE. With Preface. Price 2d., postage 1d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. By G. W. FOOTE. Price 2d., postage ½d.

PRAYER: ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND FUTILITY. By J. T. LLOYD. Price 2d., postage ½d.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. By WALTER MANN. Price 2d., postage ½d.

THE LIFE-WORSHIP OF RICHARD JEFFERIES. By ARTHUR F. THORN. With Fine Portrait of Jefferies. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

MISTAKES OF MOSES. By COLONEL INGERSOLL. 32 pages. Price 2d., postage ½d.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL. By WALTER MANN. With a Chapter on Infidel Death-Beds. Price 7d., postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:
Tel. No. 642-3405
Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

Due end of FALL Quarter
subject to recall after — NOV 10 '71 41

REC'D LD NOV 22 '71-5 PM 9 3

JAN 23 2000

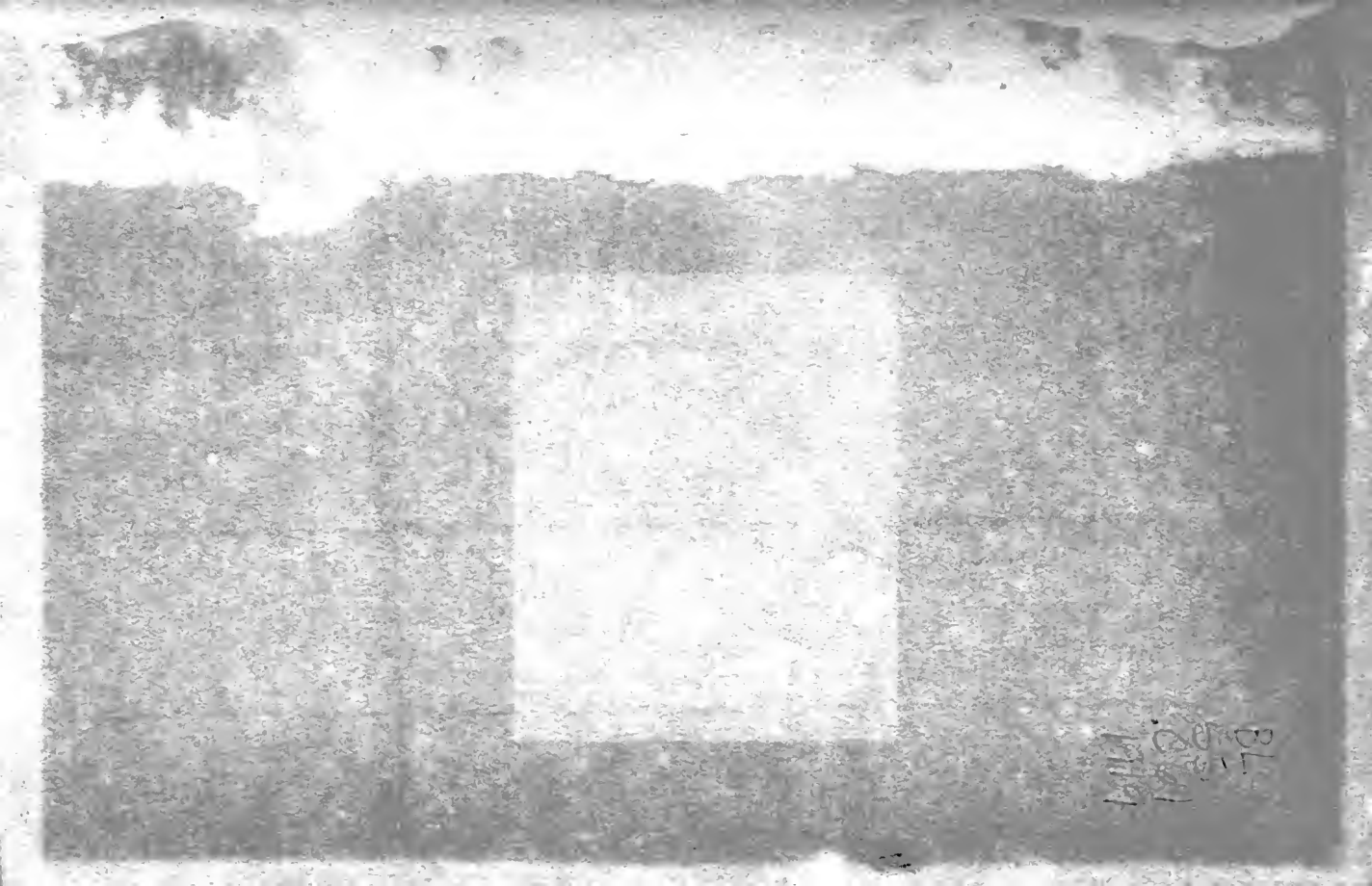
LD21A–40*m*-8,'71
(P6572s10)476–A-32

RELIGION & SEX

by Chapman COHEN

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO
Donated in memory of
DR. FRANZ ALEXANDER
by
MRS. ALEXANDER

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/religionsexstudi00coheiala

RELIGION & SEX

THE OPEN MIND LIBRARY

BEING A SERIES OF WORKS DEALING WITH QUESTIONS AS HANDLED BY DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT, IN RELIGION ETHICS, PHILOSOPHY & PSYCHOLOGY

RELIGION & SEX

STUDIES IN THE PATHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

BY CHAPMAN COHEN

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER
LONDON, EDINBURGH, & BOSTON

Published October 1919

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, *Edinburgh*

THE LIST OF CHAPTERS

I. Science & the Supernatural . . . *page* 1

II. The Primitive Mind & its Environment . 35

III. The Religion of Mental Disease . . . 51

IV. Sex & Religion in Primitive Life . . . 89

V. The Influence of Sexual & Pathologic States on Religious Belief 120

VI. The Stream of Tendency 145

VII. Conversion 169

VIII. Religious Epidemics 205

IX. Religious Epidemics—(*concluded*) . . . 226

X. The Witch Mania 243

XI. Summary & Conclusion 269

PREFACE

IN SPITE OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN DONE in the way of applying scientific principles to religious ideas, there is much that yet remains to be accomplished. Generally speaking science has only dealt with the subject of religion in its more normal and more regularised forms. The last half-century has produced many elaborate and fruitful studies of the origin of religious ideas, while comparative mythology has shown a close and suggestive relationship between creeds and symbols that were once believed to have nothing in common. But beyond these fields of research there is at least one other that has hitherto been denied the attention it richly deserves. When the anthropologist has described those conditions of primitive culture amid which he believes religious ideas took their origin, and the comparative mythologist has shown us the similarities and inter-relations of widely separated creeds, religious beliefs have yet to submit to the test of a scientific psychology, the function of which is to determine how far the same principles apply to all phases of mental life whether religious or non-religious. Moreover, in addition to the normal psychical life of man, there is that vast borderland in which the normal merges into the abnormal, and the healthy state into a pathologic one. That there is a physiology of religion is now generally admitted; but that there is also a pathology of religion is not so generally recognised. The present work seeks to emphasise this last aspect. It does not claim to be more than an outline of the subject—a sketch map of a territory that others may fill in more completely.

From another point of view the following pages

may be regarded as an attempt more completely to apply scientific principles to religious beliefs. And it would be idle to hope that such an attempt could be made without incurring much hostile criticism. In connection with most other subjects the help of science is welcomed; in connection with religion science is still regarded as more or less of an intruder, profaning a sacred subject with vulgar tests and impertinent enquiries. This must almost inevitably follow when one has to face the opposition of thousands of men who have been trained to regard themselves as the authorised exponents of all that pertains to religion, but whose training fails to supply them with a genuine scientific equipment. It should, however, be clear that an attitude of hostility to science, veiled or open, cannot be maintained. Mere authority has fallen on evil days, and in all directions is being freely challenged. There is increasing dislike to systems of thought that shrink from examination, and to conclusions that cannot withstand the most rigorous investigation. And if science really has anything of value to say on this question it cannot be held to silence for ever. Sooner or later the need for its assistance will be felt, and the self-elected authority of an order must give way. It is, moreover, impossible for science with its claim, sometimes avowed, but always implied, to cover the whole of life, to forego so large a territory as that of religion. For there can be no reasonable question that religion has played, and still plays a large part in the life of the race. Whatever be the nature of religion, science is bound either to deal with it or confess its main task to be hopeless.

Whether or not it is possible to apply known scient-

ific principles to the whole of religion will be a matter of opinion ; but the attempt is at least worth making. So much that appeared to be beyond the reach of science has been ultimately brought within its ken, so many things that seemed to stand in a class by themselves have been finally brought under some more comprehensive generalisation, and so become part of the 'cosmic machine,' that one is impelled to believe that given time and industry the same will result here. And it should never be forgotten that one aspect of scientific progress has been the taking over of large tracts of territory that religion once regarded as peculiarly its own; and just as psychology and pathology were found to hold the key to an understanding of such a phenomenon as witchcraft, so we may yet realise that a true explanation of religious phenomena is to be found, not in some supernatural world, but in the workings of natural forces imperfectly understood.

The defences set up by theologians against the scientific advance may be summarised under two heads. It is claimed that the 'facts' of the religious life belong to a world of inner experience, to a state of spiritual development which brings the subject into touch with a super-sensuous world not open to the normal human being, and with which science, as ordinarily understood, is incompetent to deal. In essence this is a very old position, and contains the kernel of 'mysticism' in all ages, from the savage state onward. This position involves a very obvious begging of the question at issue. It assumes that all attempts to correlate religious phenomena with phenomena in general have failed, and that all future attempts are similarly doomed to failure. Of course nothing of the kind has

been shown. On the contrary, the aim of the present work is to show that no dividing line can be drawn between those states of mind that have been and are classed as religious, and those that are admittedly non-religious. For various reasons I have dealt almost entirely with those conditions that are admittedly pathological, but I believe it would be possible to prove the same of all normal frames of mind and emotional states. Any human quality may be enlisted in the service of religion, but there are none that are specifically religious. It is a pure assumption that the religious visionary possesses qualities that are either absent or rudimentary in other persons. Human faculty is everywhere identical although the form in which it is expressed differs according to education, the presence of certain dominating ideas, and the general influence of one's environment. To admit the claim of the mystic is to surrender all hope of a scientific co-ordination of life. It is quite fatal to the scientific ideal and involves the re-introduction into nature of a dualism the removal of which has been one of the most marked advantages of scientific thinking.

Moreover, whatever views we may hold as to the ultimate nature of 'mind' the dependence of all frames of mind upon the brain and nervous system is now generally accepted. We may hold various theories as to the nature of mind, we may, with the late William James, treat the brain as merely a 'transmissive' organ, but even on that assumption—on behalf of which not a shred of positive evidence has been offered—the frames of mind expressed are determined by the nervous mechanism, and thus the laws of mental phenomena become ultimately the laws of the operation

of the nervous system. The 'facts' of the religious life thus become part of the facts of psychology as a whole. Its 'laws' will form part of psychological laws as a whole, and religious experiences must be handed over for examination and classification to the psychologist who in turn relies for help and understanding on various associated branches of science.

Closely allied to the claim of the 'mystic' that his experiences bring him into touch with a world of super-sensuous reality, is the attempt to prove that science is incapable of dealing with anything but "in the first place, the endless ascertainment of facts and the physical conditions under which they occur, and in the second place to the criticism of error." Well, no one denies that it is part of the work of science to ascertain facts, or even that its work consists in ascertaining facts and framing 'laws' that will explain them. But why are we to limit science to *physical* facts only? All facts are not physical. If I have a headache, the unpleasant feeling is a fact. If I feel hot or cold, angry or pleased, think one thing ugly or another beautiful, my feelings are as much 'facts' as anything else that exists. Nay, if I fancy I see a ghost, or a vision, these also are 'facts' so far as my mental state at the time is concerned. So also are my beliefs about all manner of things, and often the most important facts with which I am connected. Facts may be objective or subjective. They may exist in relation to all minds normally constituted, or they may exist in relation to my own mind only; or, yet again, they may exist only in relation to certain states of mind, but they do not, nevertheless, cease to be facts.

Now the business of science is to collect facts—all

facts—classify them, and frame generalisations that will explain their groupings and modes of operation. It talks of the facts of the physical world, the facts of the biological world, the facts of the psychological world, and so forth. This last group comprises all sorts of feelings and ideas, beliefs and experiences. Some of these facts it calls false, others it calls true—that is, they are true when they hold good of all men and women normally constituted, they are not true when they hold good of isolated individuals only, and can be seen to be the product of misinterpreted experience, or arise from a derangement—permanent or temporary—of the nervous system. But true or false they remain facts of the mental life. They must be collected, grouped, and explained exactly as other facts are collected, grouped, and explained. They fall within the scope of science, to be dealt with by scientific methods.

There is really no escape from the position that so far as religious 'facts' are parts of mental life, religion becomes logically a department of psychology. The substantial identity of all mental facts is quite unaffected by their being directed to this or that special object. As mental facts they are part of the material that it is the work of science to reduce to order. And as mental facts religious phenomena are seen to follow the same 'laws' that govern mental phenomena in general. It is perfectly true that we cannot test and measure the material of psychology with the same definiteness and accuracy that the chemist applies to the subject-matter of his department; but that may be due to want of knowledge, or to the extreme complexity and variability of the matter with which we are dealing. And

if it were true that the same tests could not be applied in psychology that are applied elsewhere, this would be no cause for scientific despair. It would only mean that fresh tests would have to be devised for a new group of facts, as every other science has already, as a matter of fact, created its own special standard of value.

The second of the two lines of defence consists in the bold assertion that the religious interpretation of subjective phenomena is itself in the nature of a true scientific induction. The methods of science are not repudiated, but welcomed. But it is argued that the non-religious explanation of religious phenomena breaks down hopelessly, while the religious explanation fully covers and explains the facts. If this were true, nothing more remains to be said, and we must accept this dualistic scheme, however repugnant it may be to orthodox scientific ideas. But is it true? Is it a fact that the non-religious explanation breaks down so completely? Hitherto the course of events has been in the contrary direction. It is the religious explanation that has, over and over again, been shown to be unreliable, the non-religious explanation that has been finally established. Insanity and epilepsy, once universally ascribed to a supernatural order of being, have been reduced to the level of nervous disorders. All the phenomena of 'possession' are still with us, it is only our understanding of them that has altered. And before it is admitted that the phenomena described as religious can never be affiliated to the phenomena described as non-religious, it must be shown—beyond all possibility of doubt—that their explanation in terms of known forces is impossible. As I have said in the body of this work, the question at issue is essentially one of

interpretation. The 'facts' of the religious life are admitted. Science no more questions the reality of the visions of the medieval mystic than it questions the visions of the non-mystic admittedly suffering from neural derangement. The crucial question is whether we have any good reason for separating the two, and while we dismiss the one as hallucination accept the other as introducing us to another order of being? I do not think there is the slightest ground for any such differentiation, and I have given in the following pages what I conceive to be good reasons for so thinking. And I hope that the fact of the explanations there offered running counter to the traditional one will not prevent readers weighing with the utmost care the proofs that are offered.

RELIGION AND SEX

CHAPTER ONE

SCIENCE AND THE SUPERNATURAL

ACCEPTING PROFESSOR TYLOR'S FAMOUS minimum definition of religion as "the belief in Spiritual Beings," it is safe to say that religious belief constitutes one of the largest facts in human history. No other single subject has occupied so large a share of man's conscious life, no other subject has absorbed so much of his energy. In very early stages of culture religious belief is universal in the fullest sense of the word. It shapes all primitive institutions; it dominates life from the cradle to the grave, and creates a shadow-land beyond the grave from which the dead continue to influence the actions of the living. At a later stage of culture we see a distinction being drawn between the natural and the supernatural, the secular and the spiritual, and the beginning of an antagonism that is still with us. Of all antagonisms conceived by the brain of man this is the deepest and the most irreconcilable. Each feels that the growth of the other threatens its own supremacy, with the result that advance from either side has been contested with the greatest obstinacy and determination. And although it is true that at present the supernatural is very largely "suspect," it is still powerful. Nor is its influence confined to the lower strata of European society. It has very many representatives among the higher culture, disguised it may be under various pseudo-philosophic forms. Altogether we may say that the supernatural has never been without its "cloud of witnesses." At all times there have been individuals,

or groups of individuals, who have believed themselves, and have been believed by others, to be in touch with another order of existence than that with which people are normally in contact. And apart from these specially favoured persons, the wide vogue of the belief in good and evil portents, in lucky and unlucky days, the attraction of the "occult" in fiction and in fact, all serve as evidence that belief in the supernatural is still a force with which one has to reckon.

To what causes are we to attribute the persistence of this belief in the supernatural? It is useless replying that its persistence is evidence of its truth. That clearly begs the whole question at issue. Mere social heredity will doubtless count for much in this direction. Men do not start their thinking afresh with each generation. It is based upon that of preceding generations; it follows set forms, and is generally influenced by that network of ideas and beliefs into which we are born and from which none of us ever completely escapes. Still that is hardly enough in itself to account for the persistence of supernaturalism. Assuming that originally there existed what was accepted as good evidence for the existence of a supernatural, it is hardly credible that every subsequent generation went on accepting it merely because one generation received evidence of its existence. As organs atrophy for want of exercise, so do beliefs die out in time for want of proof. Some kind of evidence must have been continually forthcoming in order to keep the belief alive and active. It is not a question of whether the evidence was good or bad. All evidence, it is important to bear in mind, is good to some one. The "facts" upon which thousands of people were put to death

for witchcraft would not be considered evidence to anyone nowadays, but they were once accepted as good ground for conviction.

What kind of evidence is it, then, that has been accepted as proof of the supernatural? Or, to return to Tylor's definition of religion, seeing that the belief in spiritual beings has persisted in every generation, upon what kind of evidence has this belief been nourished? Various replies might be given to this question, all of which may contain some degree of truth, or an aspect of a general truth. In the present enquiry I am concerned with one line of investigation only, one that has been strangely neglected, but which yet, I am convinced, promises fruitful results. In other directions it has been established that a great aid to an understanding of the human organism in times of health is to study its activities under conditions of disease. Abnormal psychology is now a recognised branch of psychology in general, and a glance through almost any recent text-book will show that the two form parts of a natural whole. The normal and the abnormal are in turn used to throw light on each other. And it appears to the present writer that in the matter of religious beliefs a much clearer understanding of their nature, and also of some of the conditions of their perpetuation, may be gained by a study of what has happened, and is happening, in the light of mental pathology.

To some, of course, the bare idea of there being a pathology of religion will appear an entirely unwarrantable assumption. On the other hand, the scientific study of all phases of religions having made so great headway it is hoped that a larger number will be pre-

pared for a discussion of the subject from a point of view which, if not quite new, is certainly not common. Of course, such a discussion, even if the author quite succeeds in demonstrating the truth of his thesis, will still leave the origin of the religious idea an open question. For the present we are not concerned directly with the origin of the religious idea, but with an examination of some of the causes that have served to perpetuate it, and to trace the influence in the history of religion of states of mind, both personal and collective, that are now admittedly abnormal or pathological in character. The legitimacy of the enquiry cannot be questioned. As to its value and significance, that every reader must determine for himself.

One may put the essential idea of the following pages in a sentence:—Given the religious idea as already existing, in what way, and to what extent has its development been affected by forces that are not in themselves religious, and which modern thought definitely separates from religion?

Under civilised and uncivilised conditions we find religious beliefs constantly associated with various forces—social, ethical, and psychological. Very seldom is there any serious attempt to separate them and assign to each their respective value; nor, indeed, is the task at any time an easy one. The difficulty is made the greater by the way in which writers so enlarge the meaning of "religion" that it is made to include almost everything for which one feels admiration or respect. This practice is neither helpful nor accurate. Human nature under all aspects of intellectual conviction presents the same fundamental characteristics, and a definition to be of value, while of necessity

inclusive, must also be decisively exclusive. It must unite, but it must also separate. And many current definitions of religion, while they may bear testimony to the amiability of those who frame them, are quite destitute of scientific value. In any case, the association of the religious idea with non-religious forces is a fact too patent to admit of denial; and the important task is to determine their reciprocal influence. In actual life this separation has been secured by the development of the various branches of positive thought—ethics, psychology, etc., all of which were once directly under the control of religion. What remains to be done is to separate in theory what has already been separated in fact, with such additions as a more critical knowledge may suggest as advisable.

Far more suggestive, however, than the association of religion with what we may call the normal social forces, is its connection with conditions that are now clearly recognised as abnormal. From the earliest times we find the use of drugs and stimulants, the practice of fasting and self-torture, with other methods of depressing or stimulating the action of the nervous system, accepted as well-recognised methods of inducing a sense of religious illumination, or the feeling that one is in direct communion with a supernatural order of existence. Equally significant is the world-wide acceptance—right up to recent times—of purely pathological states as evidence of supernatural intercourse. About these two sets of facts there can be no reasonable doubt. Over and over again we can observe how the promptings of disease are taken for the voice of divinity, and men and women who to-day would be handed over to the care of the physician hailed as an

incarnation of deity. In modern asylums we find one of the commonest of delusions to be that of the insane person who imagines himself to be a specially selected instrument of deity. In such instances the causal influence of pathological conditions is admitted. On the other hand, we have belonging to the more normal type the person who claims a supernatural origin for many of his actions and states of mind. And between these two extremes lie a whole series of gradations. They exist in all stages of culture, and it is difficult to see by what rule of logic or of experience one can say where the normal ends and the abnormal begins. If we assume the inference of the normal person concerning the origin of his mental states to be correct, it seems difficult to deny the possibility of those of the insane person having a similar origin, although distorted by the influence of disease. If, on the other hand, we say the insane person is wholly wrong as to the origin of his mental states, may we not also assume that the normal person has likewise erred as to the cause of his emotions or ideas?

Two considerations may be urged in support of this conclusion. In the first place, there is the fact of the fundamental identity of human qualities under all conditions of their manifestation. It is too often assumed—sometimes it is explicitly claimed—that one with what is called "a strong religious nature" possesses some quality of mind absent or undeveloped in those of an opposite type. This assumption is quite unwarrantable. The religious man is marked off from the non-religious man, not by the possession of distinct mental qualities, but solely by holding different ideas concerning the cause and significance of his men-

tal states. There is no such thing as a religious "faculty," but only qualities of mind expressed in terms of the religious idea. If I am conscious of a strong desire to work on behalf of the social betterment of my fellows, I may account for this either by attributing it to having inherited a nature modified by generations of social intercourse, or on the hypothesis that I am an instrument in the hands of a superhuman personality. But in either case the qualities manifested remain the same. Love and hatred, fear and courage, honesty and roguery, with all other human qualities, may be expressed in terms of religion, or they may be expressed in non-religious terms. It is the cause to which they are attributed, or the object to which they are directed, that marks off the religious from the non-religious person.

The second point is that the whole issue arises on a conflict of interpretations. If I question the reality of the visions or states of illumination experienced by Santa Teresa, I am not questioning that, so far as the saint herself was concerned, these states of exaltation were real. All mental states—whether arising under normal or abnormal conditions—are quite real to those who experience them. The visions of the hashish-eater are real, while they last; so are those of the victim of delirium tremens. All I question is their genuineness as corresponding to an objective reality. Over the mind of the subject these visions may exercise an absolute sway. As to their occurrence, he or she is the final and absolute authority. There can be no question here. But when we proceed from the occurrence of these visions to the question of their causation, then we are on entirely different ground. Here

it is not a question of their genuineness, or of their power, but a question of how we are to interpret them. The honesty and singlemindedness of these "inspired" characters may be admitted, but honesty or singlemindedness is no guarantee of accuracy. We do not need to ask whether the peasant girl of Lourdes experienced a vision of the Madonna, but we do need to ask whether there was anything in her mental history, social surroundings, or nervous state that would account for the vision. All the "facts" of the religious life may be admitted; the sole question at issue is whether an adequate interpretation of at least some of them may not be found in terms of a purely scientific psychology.

Taking, then, the religious idea as already existing, the following pages will be devoted to an examination of the extent to which this idea has been associated with forces and conditions that were plainly pathological. In very many individual cases it will not be difficult to trace a vivid sense of the supernatural to the presence of abnormal nervous states, sometimes deliberately induced, at other times arising of themselves. And it is a matter of mere historical observation that such individual cases have operated most powerfully to strengthen the belief in the supernatural with others. The example of Lourdes is a case in point. All Protestants will agree that the peasant girl's vision was a sheer hallucination. And yet there can be no question that this vision has served to strengthen the faith of many thousands of others in the nearness of the supernatural. And it needs but little effort of the imagination to realise how powerful such examples must have been in ages when medical science was

in its infancy, and the more subtle operations of the nervous system completely unknown.

This question, I repeat, is distinct from the much larger and wider enquiry of the origin of religion. A fairly lengthy experience of the capacity of the general mind for missing the real point at issue prevents my being too sanguine as to the efficiency of the most explicit avowal of one's purpose, but the duty of taking precautions nevertheless remains. And in elaborating an unfamiliar view of the nature of much of the world's so-called religious phenomena, the possibility of misconception is multiplied enormously. Still, a writer must do what he can to guard against misunderstanding, and in the most emphatic manner it must be said that it is not my purpose to prove, nor is it my belief, that religion springs from perverted sexuality, nor that the study of religion is no more than an exercise in pathology. Nothing is further from the writer's mind than so essentially preposterous a claim. Neither sexuality, no matter how powerful, nor disease, no matter how pronounced, can account for the religious idea. That has an entirely separate and independent origin. This should be plain to anyone who has but a merely casual acquaintance with the history of religion. It is, however, a very different thing to enquire as to the part played in the history of religion by morbid nervous states or perverted sexual feeling. That is an enquiry both legitimate and desirable; and it is one that promises to shed light on aspects of the subject otherwise very obscure. And certainly, if so-called religious feelings do not admit of explanation in terms of a scientific psychology, nothing remains but to recognise religion as something

quite apart from normal life, to hand it over to the custody of word-spinning "Mystics," and so surrender all possibility of a rational understanding of either its nature or its history.

In saying what I have concerning the probability of misconception, I have had specially in mind the attack made by the late Professor William James on what he called the "medical materialists." In that remarkable piece of religious yellow-journalism, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Professor James says of those who take up the position that a great deal of what has been accepted by the world as religious inspiration or exaltation can be accounted for as the products of disordered nervous states or perverted sexual feeling, "We are surely all familiar in a general way with this method of discrediting states of mind for which we have an antipathy. We all use it in some degree in criticising persons whose states of mind we regard as overstrained. But when other people criticise our own exalted soul-flights by calling them 'nothing but' expressions of our organic disposition, we feel outraged and hurt, for we know that, whatever be our organism's peculiarities, our mental states have their substantive value as revelations of the living truth; and we wish that all this medical materialism could be made to hold its tongue." Again, "Few conceptions are less instructive than this re-interpretation of religion as perverted sexuality.... It is true that in the vast collection of religious phenomena, some are undisguisedly amatory—*e.g.* sex deities and obscene rites in polytheism, and ecstatic feelings of union with the Saviour in a few Christian Mystics. But then why not equally call religion an

aberration of the digestive functions, and prove one's point by the worship of Bacchus and Ceres, or by the ecstatic feelings of some other saints about the Eucharist?" Or, seeing that the Bible is full of the language of respiratory oppression, "one might almost as well interpret religion as a perversion of the respiratory function." And if it is pointed out that active interest in religion synchronises with adolescence, "the retort again is easy.... The interest in mechanics, physics, chemistry, logic, philosophy, and sociology, which springs up during adolescent years along with that in poetry and religion, is also a perversion of the sexual instinct." *

Excellent fooling, this, but little else. I do not know that anyone has ever claimed that religion took its origin in sexual feeling, or that this would alone provide an explanation of historical religion. All that anyone has ever urged is that a deal of so-called religious feeling, past and present, can be shown to be due to unsatisfied or perverted sexual feeling —which is a very different statement, and one of which the truth may be demonstrated from Professor James's own pages. But between saying that certain feelings are wrongly interpreted in terms of an already existing idea, and saying that the idea itself is nothing but these same feelings transformed, there is an obvious and important difference. In every case the religious idea is taken for granted. Its origin is a quite different subject of enquiry. But once the idea is in existence there is always the probability of evidence for its truth being found in the wrong direction. The analogy of the digestive and respiratory organs

* *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 11–3.

is clever, but futile. The belief that much which has passed for religious feeling is perverted sexuality is not based merely upon the language employed. The language is only symptomatic. The terminology of respiration and digestion when used in connection with religion is frankly and palpably symbolic. That of sexual love is as often frankly literal, and can be correlated with the actual state of the person using it. Digestion and respiration must go on in any case; but it is precisely the point at issue whether with a different sexual life these so-called religious ecstatic states would have been experienced. When we find religious characters of strongly marked amorous dispositions, but leading an ascetic life, using toward the object of their adoration terms usually associated with strong sexual feeling, it does not seem extravagant to find here a little more than what may be covered by mere symbolism. Would the medieval monk have been tempted by Satan in the form of beautiful women had he been happily married? Would Santa Teresa or Catherine of Sienna have used the language they did use to express their relations to Jesus had they been wives and mothers? Such questions admit of one answer, which is, in its way, decisive. Professor James admits that modern psychology holds as a general postulate "there is not a single one of our states of mind, high or low, healthy or morbid, that has not some organic process as its condition."* The 'medical materialist' can ask for no more than this. But this being granted, on what ground are we to be forbidden finding in these same organic processes the condition of the visions and ecstatic

* *Varieties*, p. 14.

states with which *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is so largely concerned?

Again, it may be granted that adolescence brings with it an awakening of the whole mental life, not of religion alone. But the analogy goes no further, and, in any case, it begs the question. The full significance of the connection will be seen when we come to deal with initiation in primitive times and conversion in the modern period. At present it suffices to point out that the interest in art, in science, in literature, in sociology, are ends in themselves, and one need go no further than the developing mental life for an explanation. But the essential question here is whether this growing life can or cannot find complete satisfaction quite apart from religion. A developing interest in the larger social life is common to all, and to some extent this is secured by the pressure of forces that are simply inescapable. On the other hand, an interest in religion only exists with some, and then it may usually be traced to a conscious direction of their energies. Moreover, those who show no special interest in religion evince no lack of anything—save in religious terms. In every respect they exhibit the same mental and emotional qualities as their fellows. The only discernible difference is that while in the one case adolescent nature is expressed in terms of religion, in the other case it is expressed in terms of a larger social life.

The question here might be put thus: Given a generation not taught to express its growing life in terms of religion, could adequate and satisfactory expression be found in the social life to which adolescence is unquestionably an introduction? Many

would answer unhesitatingly, yes. They would argue that what are called the religious feelings, are normal social feelings exploited in the interests of the religious idea. They would deny that there is any such thing as a religious quality of mind. Any mental quality may be directed to a religious end, but all may find complete expression and satisfaction in a non-religious social life. This is the real question at issue, and yet Professor James never once, in the whole of his 500 pages, addresses himself to it.

Apart from sex, there is the important question of the relation between abnormal and morbid nervous states and religious illumination. How far has the one been mistaken for the other? To what extent have people accepted the outcome of pathological conditions as proofs of intercourse with an unseen spiritual world? There is no doubt that among uncivilised people this is usually, if not invariably, the case. And our knowledge of the relations between the nervous system and mental states—imperfect as it still is—is so recent, that it is not surprising that fasting, self-torture, solitary meditation, etc., because of the states of mind to which they give rise, have been universally valued as aids to the religious life. Dr. D. G. Brinton says:—

"When I say that all religions depend for their origin and continuation directly upon inspiration, I state an historic fact. It may be known under other names, of credit or discredit, as mysticism, ecstasy, rhapsody, demoniac possession, the divine afflatus, the gnosis, or, in its latest christening, 'cosmic consciousness.' All are but expressions of a belief that knowledge arises, words are uttered or actions performed not

through conscious ideation or reflective purpose, but through the promptings of a power above or beyond the individual mind."*

The connection between very many, at least, of these inspirational moods and pathological states is too obvious to be ignored. Professor James admits that "we cannot possibly ignore these pathological aspects of the subject." His notice of them, however, reminds one of the preacher who advised his hearers to look a certain difficulty boldly in the face—and pass on. No serious attempt is made to deal with them. A huge mass of "religious experiences" is thrown at the reader's head without any adequate explanation. It is a glorified revival meeting in an expensive volume. The testimony of a crowd of religious enthusiasts of all ages is accepted at practically face value. Thus, a religious writer who experiences the fairly common feeling of exaltation during a storm at sea, and explains his carelessness of danger as resulting from his "certainty of eternal life,"† is gravely cited as evidence of the working of the religious consciousness. What, then, are we to make of those who experience a similar feeling, but who are without the certainty of eternal life? The declaration of St. Ignatius that a single hour of meditation taught him more of the truth of "heavenly things than all the teachings of the doctors" is given as evidence of mystic illumination.‡ So with numerous other cases. We are even informed that "nitrous oxide and ether, especially nitrous oxide, when sufficiently diluted with air, stimulate the mystical consciousness in an extraordinary degree."§

* *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 50.

† Page 288. ‡ Page 410. § Page 387.

There seems no reason why the same claim should not be made on behalf of whisky. If one were not assured to the contrary, one might conclude that Professor James wrote this volume to poke fun at the whole tribe of mystics and their followers.

The use made by Professor James of his long list of cases is the more remarkable, since he quite correctly points out that there are no religious feelings, only feelings directed towards a religious end. But if this be so, how are we justified in taking the accounts of religious visionaries as correct descriptions of the nature of their own mental states? Clearly, we need a study of these cases quite apart from the mystical interpretation of them. Instead of a study Professor James presents us with a catalogue—useful from a documentary point of view, but useless to any other end. And he is so averse to subjecting his examples to analysis that, when the extravagance of certain cases are glaring, he warns us that it is unfair to impute narrowness of mind as a vice of the individual, because in "religious and theological matters he probably absorbs his narrowness from his generation."* Granted; only one would like to know what reason there is for not deriving virtues as well as vices from the same source? And, deeper enquiry still, may not the religious interpretation itself be a product of the special environment of the period?

The study of religious phenomena from the point of view above indicated is of first-rate importance. But although much has been said, parenthetically and inferentially, on the subject by various writers, the enquiry has never been exhaustively or systematic-

* Page 370.

ally pursued. This is not due to any lack of material; that is abundant among both savage and civilised peoples. Perhaps it is because, while it has been considered permissible to point out that certain individuals have mistaken their own morbid states for evidence of divine illumination, too much ill-will would have been aroused had the powerful part played by this factor in religious development as a whole been pointed out. Still less admissible would it have been to point out, as will be done in succeeding chapters, that the deliberate culture of abnormal states of mind has been a part of the ritual of religions from the most primitive to the most recent times. In this connection it is worth noting that a very clear and shrewd essay on the connection between love and religious devotion by Isaac d'Israeli, which appeared in the first issue of the *Miscellanies of Literature*, was quietly eliminated from subsequent editions.

My purpose, therefore, is to give Professor James's query—"Under just what biographic conditions did the sacred writers bring forth their contributions to the holy volume? and what had they exactly in their several individual minds, when they delivered their utterances?"*—a wider scope. What are the conditions, biographic and social, under which certain persons have imagined themselves, and have been believed by others, to be specially favoured with divine illumination? The majority of people, it may safely be said, are conscious of no such experience. In what respect, then, do the favoured few differ from their fellows? Must we assume that by some rare quality of natural endowment, or by some unusual development of faculty,

* *Varieties*, p. 4.

they are brought into touch with a wider and deeper reality? Or are we to seek a less romantic explanation with the aid of known tendencies and forces in human nature? And, further, as this minority are not conscious of divine illumination all the time, what is it that differentiates their normal state from their abnormal condition?

These are pertinent questions, and demand answer. But no answer of real value will be found in ordinary religious writings. Rhapsodical eulogies of religion tell us nothing; less than nothing that is useful, since theories that obtain in such quarters are based upon the absolute veracity of the phenomena under consideration. We may gather from this direction what religious people say or do, but not why they say or do these things. A description of the states of mind of religious people, such as is given by Professor James, is interesting enough, but it is their causation that is of fundamental importance. And their causation is only to be understood by associating them with other and more fundamental processes. Within recent years psychology owes much of the advance made to a closer study of the physiology of the nervous system, and if genuine advance is to be made in our understanding of religious phenomena we must adopt the same plan of investigation. We do not, for example, understand the nature of demoniacal possession by a mere collation of cases. It is only when we put them side by side with similar cases that now come under the control of the physician, and associate them with certain peculiar nervous conditions, and a particular social environment, that we find ourselves within sight of a rational explanation. Without adopting this plan

we are in the position of one trying to determine the nature of a locomotive in complete ignorance of its internal mechanism. Yet this is precisely the position of the professional exponent of religion. As a student the budding divine has his head filled with historic creeds, and texts, and dogmas, and doctrines, none of which can possibly tell him anything of the real nature of religion. On the contrary, they act as so many obstacles to his acquiring real knowledge in later life. And it is a striking fact that while the professional astronomer, biologist, or physicist each adds to our knowledge of the subject that falls within his respective department, we owe little or nothing of our knowledge of the nature of religion to the professional theologian.

To put the whole matter in a sentence, the study of religion must be affiliated to the study of life as a whole. If possible, we must get at the determining factors that lead one person to expend his energy on religion and see supernatural influence in a thousand and one details of his life, while another person, with apparently the same mental qualities, finds complete satisfaction in another direction, and is conscious of no such supernatural influence. It is scientifically inadmissible to posit a "religious faculty" organically ear-marked for religious use. Something of this kind is evidently in the minds of those who explain Darwin's agnosticism as due to atrophy of his religious sense, consequent on over-absorption in scientific pursuits, and who also argue that the "religious faculty," like a physiological structure, increases in efficiency with use and atrophies with disuse. There is no reason for believing that, had Darwin been profoundly re-

ligious, his mental qualities would have been different to what they were. They would have been expressed in a different form, that is all. As I have already said, there are no such things as specifically religious qualities of the mind. There may be hope or fear or love or hatred or terror or devotion or wonder in relation to religion, but they are precisely the same mental qualities that meet us in relation to other things. The old "faculty" psychology is dead, and the religious faculty must go with it.* Mental qualities may be roused to activity in connection with a belief in the supernatural, or they may be expressed in connection with mundane associations. Even the belief in the supernatural is only an expression of the same qualities of mind that with fuller knowledge result in a scientific generalisation. Whatever be the exciting cause, mental qualities themselves remain unchanged.

In the present enquiry we are not concerned with a disproval of the religious idea, but with an examination of the conditions of its expression; less with the varieties of religious experience than with the nature of its manifestations. How far may religious experience be explained as a misinterpretation of normal non-religious life? To what extent have pathological

* "The hypothesis of faculties . . . must be regarded as productive of much error in psychology. It has led to the false supposition that mental activity, instead of being one and the same throughout its manifold phases, is a juxtaposition of totally distinct activities, answering to a bundle of detached powers, somehow standing side by side, and exerting no influence on one another. Sometimes this absolute separation of the parts of mind has gone so far as to personify the several faculties as though they were distinct entities."—Sully, *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 26.

nervous states influenced the building up of the religious consciousness? There can be no question that the last-named factor is an important one. This is admitted by Professor James in the following passage:—

"You will in point of fact hardly find a religious leader of any kind in whose life there is no record of automatisms. I speak not merely of savage priests and prophets, whose followers regard automatic utterance and action as by itself tantamount to inspiration, I speak of leaders of thought and subjects of intellectualised experience. St. Paul had his visions, his ecstasies, his gifts of tongues, small as was the importance he attached to the latter. The whole array of Christian saints and heresiarchs, including the greatest, the Bernards, the Loyolas, the Luthers, the Foxes, the Wesleys, had their visions, voices, rapt conditions, guiding impressions, and 'openings.' They had these things because they had exalted sensibility, and to such things persons of exalted sensibility are liable."*

The fact is unquestionable, but the question remains, "In what sense were these people exalted? Did their exalted sensibility really bring them into touch with a form of existence hidden from persons of a coarser fibre? Or did it belong to a class of cases which in a more violent form comes within the province of the physician? The subjects, says Professor James, "actually feel themselves played upon by powers beyond their will. The evidence is dynamic; the god or spirit moves the very organs of their body. . . . We have distinct professions of being under the direction of a foreign power, and serving as its mouthpiece."

**Varieties*, p. 478.

Of course we have, but for diagnostic purposes such professions are quite valueless. What these people are conscious of, and all they are conscious of, is a series of feelings of a more or less unusual kind. Equally convinced was the medieval demoniac that a spirit moved the very organs of his body. Equally convinced is the modern spiritualist medium that his body is controlled by a disembodied spirit. It is not a question of the actuality of certain states, but of their origin. The intense conviction of the subject of the seizure is, as evidence, quite irrelevant. The subjective state is always real, whether it belongs to a saint in ecstasy or a drunkard in delirium tremens. There are no states of mind more "real" while they last than those due to opium or hashish. But it is never suggested that this is evidence of their veracity. In such cases the testimony of a skilled outsider is of far greater value than the conviction of the visionary. We are bound to appeal to Paul, and Loyola, and Fox, and Wesley to know what their feelings were, because here they are the supreme authorities. But we must consult others to discover why they experienced these feelings. An illusion is no more than a false interpretation of a real subjective experience; although many are inclined to treat the rejection of the interpretation as equivalent to a charge of imposture or deliberate lying.

It is also a matter of demonstration that these religious experiences are strictly determined by environmental conditions. Thousands of Christians have been favoured with visions of Jesus or of the Christian heaven in their dying moments. Millions of Jews and Mohammedans have lived and died without any such

experience—the very persons to whom, from an evidential point of view—such visions would be most useful. The spiritual experience is determined by the pre-existing religious belief. When belief in a personal devil was general, visions of Satan were common. The evidence for personal conflicts with Satan is of precisely the same nature and strength as is the evidence for intercourse with deity. When the belief in Satan died out, visions and conflicts with him ceased. How can we discriminate between the two classes of cases? Why should the testimony of a great Christian character that he is conscious of intercourse with deity be more authoritative than the testimony of, perhaps, the same person on other occasions, of conflict with a personal devil? Moreover, visions and a sense of contact with a super-normal world are not peculiar to the religious character. It is a common feature of a general psychopathic condition. Medical works are filled with such instances. And it is only to be expected that when the psychopath is of a deeply religious nature the affection will find a religious expression. What is clearly needed is an explanation that will cover the phenomenon as it appears in both a religious and a non-religious form.

We may take as illustrative of what has been said the following case as given by Dr. W. H. Ireland. It is that of a Berlin bookseller who placed on record a clear description of his impressions while in ill-health, and which entirely ceased on recovery. His delusions mostly took the form of human figures; of these he says:—

"I saw, in the full use of my senses, and (after I had got the better of the fright which at first seized me,

and the disagreeable effects which it caused) even in the greatest composure of mind, for almost two months, constantly and involuntarily, a number of human and other apparitions—nay, I even heard their voices. For the most part I saw human figures of both sexes; they commonly passed to and fro, as if they had no connection with each other, like people at a fair where all is bustle. Sometimes they appeared to have business with one another. Once or twice I saw amongst them persons on horseback, and dogs and birds; these figures all appeared to me in their natural size, as distinctly as if they had existed in real life, with the several tints on the uncovered parts of the body, and with all the different kinds and colours of clothes." *

Here we have the case of a man who was under no misconception as to the nature of his visions. But it is safe to say that had he been of a less practical and analytic turn of mind, had he been, moreover, deeply interested in religious matters, we might have had an altogether different presentation of the facts.

In the next instance, also given by Dr. Ireland, we have a religious explanation given of somewhat similar experiences:—

"A poor woman complained to me that she was continually persecuted by the devils who let loose at her all sorts of blasphemies, and, indeed, all the worse the more she exerted herself not to attend to them; but often, also, when she was talking and active. She had already been to a clergyman who should exorcise the devil, and who had judiciously directed her to me. I asked in which ear the devil always talked to her. She

* *The Blot upon the Brain*, p. 4.

was surprised at the question, which she had never started for herself, but now recognised that it always occurred in the left ear. I explained to her that it was an affection of the ear which now and then occurs, but she was doubtful."*

Here we have a distinctly physical affection ascribed to supernatural agency. In this case the inference is promptly corrected by the physician. But given a different environment, an atmosphere permeated with a belief in the supernatural, an absence of adequate scientific advice, and the more primitive explanation is certain to prevail. In the next instance —that of Martin Luther—we have just this conjuncture of circumstances, with the inevitable result. Writing of his experience in 1530, Luther says:—

"When I was in Coburg in 1530, I was tormented with a noise in my ear, just as though there was some wind tearing through my head. The devil had something to do with it. . . . When I try to work, my head becomes filled with all sorts of whizzing, buzzing, thundering noises, and if I did not leave off on the instant I should faint away. For the last two or three days I have not been able to even look at a letter. My head has lessened down to a very short chapter; soon it will be only a paragraph, then only a syllable, then nothing at all. The day your letter came from Nuremburg I had another visit from the devil. . . . This time the evil one got the better of me, drove me out of my bed, and compelled me to seek the face of man."†

There is no need to quote more of this class of cases,

**The Blot upon the Brain*, p. 16.

† Cited by Dr. Ireland, p. 49.

at least for the present. Their name is legion. One could, in fact, construct an ascending series of cases, all agreeing in their symptom, and differing only in the explanation offered. The series would commence with the explanation of a possessing spirit, and end with that of a deranged nervous system. Ignorant of the nature, or even of the existence, of a nervous system, primitive man explains abnormal mental states as due to a malignant spirit. Martin Luther, George Fox, or John Bunyan, living at a time when the activity of evil spirits was a firmly held doctrine, attribute their infirmities to satanic influence. We are in the true line of descent. To-day we have with us every one of the phenomena on which the satanic theory rested, but they are described, and prescribed for, in medical works instead of manuals of exorcism. The supernaturalist theory gives way to that of the expert neurologist. The exorcist is replaced by the physician. Instead of expelling an intruding demon, we have to repair a deranged system. We cannot argue that while these affections remain constant in character their causes may have been different in other ages from what they are now. That is pure absurdity. To claim that the religious mystic is in moments of exaltation brought into contact with a "deeper reality" is to invite the retort that one might make a similar claim on behalf of the inmates of a lunatic asylum. We cannot, with any pretence to rationality, accept the verdicts of both the neurologist and the exorcist. If we agree that certain states of mind to-day have their origin in neural disorder, on what ground can we believe that similar mental states occurring a thousand or two thousand years ago were due to supernatural

stimulation? We may be told that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. This may be true, and while it is an observation that would not occur to a fool, it needs no supreme wisdom for its excogitation, and as generally used it is an excuse for idle speculation and grotesque theory. Far more useful is the lesson, sadly needed, that there are few things in heaven or earth that will not yield their secret to a method of investigation that is sanely conceived and diligently employed.

The utter uselessness of accepting at its face value anyone's explanation of the nature of his subjective experience, is well shown by the once universal belief in witchcraft. If there is a single belief on behalf of which a mass of apparently unimpeachable evidence could be produced, it is this one. It has run its course throughout the whole world. It is still accepted by probably half the human race. In our own country eminent men, not alone theologians, but doctors, lawyers, statesmen, and men of letters, have given their solemn testimony in its favour. Thousands of people have been bewitched, and their symptoms described by thousands of others. More remarkable still, those accused have often enough confessed their guilt. Every possible corroboration has been given to this belief, and yet it is now scouted by educated persons all over the civilised world. Even religious teachers accept the explanation that these witchcraft cases were due to distinctly pathological conditions, and to the power of suggestion operating upon uninformed minds during an unenlightened age. But communications with spiritual beings rest on no better foundation than communication with Satan. Whether the al-

leged illumination be diabolic or angelic, the evidence for either, or both, is the same. The testimony of a man like the Rev. R. J. Campbell that he is conscious of a divine influence in his life is of no greater value than that of the medieval peasant who felt himself tormented by Satan. The one person is no better authority than is the other on such a topic. Both are the heirs of the ages, inheritors of a superstition that goes back to the most primitive ages of mankind, only modified in its expression by the culture of contemporary life.

There is nothing new under the sun, and human nature remains substantially unchanged generation after generation. All the phenomena on which the belief in witchcraft was based, remain. Cases of delusion are common, and the power of suggestion is an established fact in psychology. All that has happened is this: taking the facts on which the belief was based, modern science has shown them to be explainable without the slightest reference to the supernatural. And this is the principle that must be applied in other directions. Old occurrences must be explained in the light of new knowledge. This is the accepted rule in other directions, and it is of peculiar value in relation to religious beliefs. To know what religious people have thought and felt and said gives us no more than the data for a scientific study of the subject. To know *why* they thought and felt and spoke thus is what we really need to understand. But if we are to do this we must relate phases of mind that are called religious to other phases of a non-religious character. I believe it is quite possible to do this. From medical records and from numerous biographies it is possible

to parallel all the experiences of the religious mystic. We can see the same sense of exaltation, the same conviction of illumination, the same belief that one is the tool of a superior power. Take, as merely illustrative of this, the case of J. Addington Symonds, as narrated by Professor James, who cites it as an example of a "mystical experience with chloroform." Symonds tells us that until he was twenty-eight years of age he was liable to extreme states of exaltation concerning the nature of self. (It is worth while pointing out that Sir James Crichton-Browne expresses the opinion that Symonds's higher nerve centres were in some degree enfeebled by these abnormal states.) In addition to this confession he placed on record an interesting experience while under the influence of chloroform. He says:—

"After the choking and stifling had passed away, I seemed at first in a state of utter blankness; then came flashes of intense light, alternating with blankness, and with a keen sense of vision of what was going on in the room around me, but no sensation of touch. I thought that I was near death; when suddenly my soul became aware of God who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak, in an intense personal reality. I felt him streaming in like light upon me.... I cannot describe the ecstasy I felt. Then, as I gradually awoke from the influence of the anæsthetic, the old sense of my relation with the world began to return, the new sense of my relation to God began to fade.... Only think of it. To have felt for that long dateless ecstasy of vision the very God, in all purity, tenderness, and truth, and absolute love, and then to find that I had after all had no revelation,

but that I had been tricked by the abnormal excitement of my brain."

With a slight variation of expression this confession might have come direct from the lips of the most pronounced mystic. There is no question of the intense reality of the experience. That was as vivid as anything that ever occurred to any saint in the calendar. Still, no one will dream of claiming that the way to get *en rapport* with the higher mysteries is by way of a dose of chloroform. The distinction here is that Symonds knew and described the cause of his experience. And no one will question that the phrase "tricked by the abnormal excitement of my brain" covers the ground. Of course, there is always the easy retort that saints and mystics did not use chloroform to produce their visions. True, but chloroform is not the only agent by means of which a person may be thrown into an abnormal state. Other means may be used; and as a matter of fact, the use of herbs and drugs, as methods of producing ecstatic states, have obtained in religious ceremonies from the most primitive times. As we shall see later, tobacco, hashish, coca, laurel water, and similar agents have been largely utilised for this purpose. And when this plan is not adopted—although very often the two things run side by side—we find fasting and other forms of self-torture practised because of the abnormal conditions produced.

It is not argued or implied that in all this there was of necessity deliberate imposture. That would imply the possession of greater knowledge than actually existed. But it was known that ecstatic states followed the use of certain drugs, or were consequent on

certain austerities, and they were valued because they were believed to bring people into communion with a hidden spiritual world. In this way there has always been going on a more or less deliberate culture of the supernatural, in more primitive times by crude and easily recognisable means, later by methods that are more subtle in character and more difficult of detection. But the method of inducing a sense of "spiritual" illumination by means of practices alien to the normal life of man remains unchanged throughout. The collation of the conditions under which mystical states of mind are experienced among savages with similar experiences among the higher races, proves at once that this statement contains no exaggeration of the facts.

The continuity of the phenomena is, indeed, of profound significance, and is too often ignored. It is often asserted that we have to explain the lower by the higher, and we can only understand the significance of religion in its lower forms by bearing in mind the higher manifestations. This is sheer fallacy. In nature the higher develops out of the lower, of which it is compounded. In biology, for example, it is now generally conceded that the secret of animal life lies in the cell. This may be modified in all kinds of directions, the resulting organic structure may be of the utmost complexity, but the basis remains unchanged. So, too, with a great deal of so-called religious phenomena. The story is not only continuous, but the same elements remain unchanged with only those modifications initiated by a changed environment. And just as we are driven back to the cell to explain organic structure, so for an understanding of the phenomena under con-

sideration we must study their primitive elements. Analysis must precede synthesis here as elsewhere.

A survey of the subject is not at all exhausted by a study of abnormal conditions, so far as these have entered into the life of religion. There still remains the study of perfectly normal frames of mind that are misinterpreted and diverted into religious channels. The importance of this will be seen more clearly when we come to deal with the subject of conversion. That "conversion" is a phenomenon of adolescence is now settled beyond all reasonable doubt. Statistics are conclusive on this point. But the advocate of revivalism quite misses the true significance of the fact. Current religious literature is full of quite meaningless chatter concerning the change of view, the larger and more unselfish activities, that arise as a consequence of conversion. There is really no evidence that the changes indicated have any connection with conversion. All that does happen can be more simply and more adequately explained as resulting from physiological and psychological changes in terms of racial and social evolution. The whole significance of adolescence lies in the bursting into activity of feelings hitherto dormant, and the quickening of a desire for communion with a larger social life. The individual becomes less self-centred, more alive to, and more responsive to the claims of others; he displays tendencies towards what the world calls self-sacrifice, but which mean, in the truest sense, self-realisation. That these changes are often expressed in terms of religion is undeniable. This, however, may be no more than an environmental accident, quite as much so as was the case when epilepsy was explained in terms of possession.

So far as one can see, there are no feelings or impulses characteristic of adolescence that could not receive complete satisfaction in a rationally ordered social life. To-day it usually happens that the strongest expressed influences brought to bear upon the individual are of a religious kind, with the result that adolescent human nature is most apt to express itself in religious language. It must always be borne in mind that we are all as dependent upon our environment for the form in which our explanation of things is cast, as we are for the language in which we express those ideas. The whole enquiry opened is a very wide one, with which I can only deal parenthetically. It is really an enquiry as to how far the religious theory of human nature rests upon a wrong interpretation of perfectly normal feelings, or to what extent supernaturalistic ideas are perpetuated by the exploitation —innocent exploitation, maybe—of man's social nature. It is extremely probable that a deeper knowledge, a more accurate analysis of human qualities, will disclose the truth that man is a social animal in a much more profound sense than has usually attached to that phrase, and the expression of these qualities in terms of religious beliefs, or in terms of non-religious beliefs, is wholly determined by the knowledge current in the society in which he moves.

I conclude this chapter with one more attempt to avoid misunderstanding. For purposes of clarity it will be necessary to consider various factors out of relation to other factors. But it should hardly need pointing out that in actual life such a separation does not obtain. The organism functions as a whole; each part acts upon and is acted upon by every other part.

Life in action is a synthesis, and one resorts to analysis only for the purpose of more adequate comprehension. It is not, moreover, pretended that any one of the factors described in the following pages will explain religion, nor even that all of them combined will do so. The origin of the religious idea is a quite different enquiry, and is adequately dealt with in the writings of men like Tylor, Frazer, Spencer, and other representatives of the various schools of anthropologists. My present purpose is of a more restricted kind. It is that of tracing the operation of various processes, some normal, but most of them abnormal, that have in all ages been accepted as evidence for the supernatural. That the religious idea has been associated with these processes, and that for multitudes they have served as strong evidence of its truth, cannot be denied. And an examination of this aspect of the history of religion ought not to be ignored, however unpalatable such a study may be to certain supersensitive minds.

CHAPTER TWO THE PRIMITIVE MIND & ITS ENVIRONMENT

EVER SINCE THE TIME OF ARISTOTLE it has been an accepted truth that man is a social animal. Not only is individual human nature such that it craves for intercourse with its kind, but it can only be effectively understood in the light of those thousands of generations of associated life that lie behind us all. As an isolated object, considered, that is, apart from his fellows, man is more or less of a myth. At any rate, he would not be the man we know and so may well be left out of account. Man as we know him is essentially a member of a group; he is a part of a really organic structure inasmuch as the characteristics of each part are determined by its relations to the whole, and the characteristics of the whole determined by a synthesis of the qualities of the parts.

But while there is agreement in the fact, there is a considerable divergence of opinion as to its nature. What is the nature of this fact of sociability? What is the character of the force that binds the members of a group so closely together? By some, the cause of sociability is found in the pressure exerted upon all by purely external forces. The need for protection, it is said, drives human beings together, and thus in course of time the feeling of sociability is developed. This seems much like mistaking a consequence for a cause. It certainly leaves unanswered the question *Why* should people have drawn together in the face of danger? Most certainly collective action strengthens the capacity for defence; and it also increases the certainty of obtaining the means of subsistence. Such consequences furnish a justification, so to speak, of group life, but they disclose neither its nature nor its

cause. And most certainly they do not bring us into touch with the fundamental qualities of *human* society. The need for food, shelter, or protection will not differentiate the gregarious from the non-gregarious forms of life, nor the social from the merely gregarious. All forms of life require food, protection, and shelter; they are part of animal economics. There is nothing specifically human about them.

We may reach what I conceive to be the truth in another way. Environment is to-day almost a cant word. It is very largely used, and, as one might expect, largely misunderstood. Without actually saying it in so many words, a vast number of people seem to conceive the environment as consisting of the purely material surroundings of man. This is to overlook a most important fact. Even in the lowest stages of human society, where man's power over natural forces is of the poorest kind, it is not an exact statement of the case, and it is profoundly untrue when we take society in its higher developments. If we take the lowest existing savage race we find that its attitude towards life, what it does, and what it refrains from doing, is the product of a certain mental attitude, which is itself the outcome of a number of inherited ideas and customs. A number of white people, placed in exactly the same material environment and faced with exactly the same external circumstances, bring a different psychological inheritance into play, and act in an entirely different manner. If we transport a Chinaman into England, or an Englishman into China, we find that both of them possess the same biological and material needs whether in their native country or elsewhere. Yet this community of needs does not make

the Chinaman a member of English society, nor an Englishman a member of Chinese society. They are one in virtue of certain broad human characteristics; they are divided by certain qualities characteristic of their special groups. Each society is marked by the possession of certain psychological characteristics—a number of specific beliefs and emotional developments—without which its distinctive group character disappears. This is true of groups within the State; it is true of the State as a whole; it is true, on the most general scale of all, of the race.

In other words, the distinguishing feature of human society is the possession of a psychological medium. The adaptations that the human being must make are mainly of a psychological character. Their *form* may be partly determined by external conditions, but this does not affect the general truth. Whether we take man in a civilised or in an uncivilised state we find the important thing about him to be his relations to his fellows. He is not merely a member of a tribe or a society, but he thinks that society's thoughts, he feels their emotions, his individual life is an expression of the psychical life of the group to which he belongs. And his transactions with nature are an expression of the ideas and beliefs current in the society of which he is a part.

The recognition of this truth was one of the outstanding contributions of Herbert Spencer to the science of sociology. Whereas other writers had stressed the power of the environment, as a purely material thing, in shaping human institutions, Spencer placed chief stress upon the emotional and intellectual life of primitive man as determining their beginnings. He showed

how man's feelings and beliefs about himself, and about his fellows, and about the world of living forces with which he believed himself to be surrounded, were the all-important factors of social evolution. And the subsequent history of society has been such that scientific sociology is very largely the study of the growth and elaboration of an essentially psychical environment. The lower animal world—except so far as we allow for the operation of instincts—has, broadly, only the existence of other animals and the physical surroundings for its environment. With man it is vastly different. Owing primarily to language, the environment of the man of to-day is made up in part of the ideas of men who lived and died thousands of years ago. The use of clothing and the invention of tools would alone make mind a dominant fact in human life. But apart from these things, the great fact of social heredity, in virtue of which one generation enjoys the acquired culture of preceding generations, and without which civilisation would have no existence, is a great and dominant *mental* fact. Our institutions, our customs, are transmitted to us as so many psychic facts. Every new invention, every fresh culture acquisition, is helping to strengthen and broaden the psychical environment of man. Each newcomer is born into it; it moulds his nature and determines his life, as his own career and his own acquisition help to mould the life of his successors. Whether the phenomena be simple or complex, whether we are dealing with man in a civilised or in an uncivilised state, there is no escape from the general truth that man is everywhere under the domination of his mental life.

So far as this enquiry is concerned, we need only

deal with one aspect of the psychological medium in which primitive human life moves. And so far as primitive mankind seeks to control the movements of social life, there can be no question that this is done under the impulsion of that class of beliefs which we call religious. The operation of religious belief in savage society is neither spasmodic nor local. It is, on the contrary, universal and persistent. It influences every event of daily life with a force that the modern mind finds very difficult to appreciate. In almost every action the savage feels himself to be in touch with a supersensual world of living beings that exert a direct and inescapable influence. And any study of human evolution that is to be of real value must take this circumstance into consideration to a far greater extent than is usually done. Professor Frazer, dealing with the origin of various social institutions, rightly observes that "we are only beginning to understand the mind of the savage, and therefore the mind of our savage forefathers who created these institutions and handed them down to us," and warns us that "a knowledge of the truth may involve a reconstruction of society such as we can hardly dream of." He also warns us that we have at all times, in dealing with social origins, to "reckon with the influence of superstition, which pervades the life of the savage and has contributed to build up the social organism to an incalculable extent."*

In emphasising this it must not be taken to imply that because social institutions and human actions are in primitive times moulded by religious beliefs, they stand to them in a relation of complete dependence

* *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship*, pp. 36–7.

It only means that the psychological medium is of such a character that supernaturalistic reasons are found for doings things that are susceptible to a totally different explanation. The facts of life are expressed in terms of supernaturalism. Birth, marriage, death, social cohesion, leadership, health and disease, are all natural facts, and the mere play of social selection determines the weeding out of practices that are sufficiently adverse to tribal well-being to threaten its security. But in primitive times all these facts are allied with religious beliefs, and to the primitive mind the religious belief becomes the chief feature connected with them. As a matter of fact, this is far from an uncommon feature of social life to-day. The amount of supernaturalism current is still very large; and one still finds people explaining some of the plainest facts of social life in terms of supernaturalistic beliefs. It is all part of the truth that man is always under the domination of the psychological forces.

This being granted, the enquiry immediately presents itself, How comes it that the facts of social life should be expressed in terms of supernaturalism? Why do these facts not immediately present themselves in their true nature? To answer this question one must bear in mind a yet further truth. This is that the explanation which man offers to himself or to others of phenomena must always be in terms of current knowledge. A modern called upon to explain a storm, an eclipse, or a disease, does so in terms of current physical or biological science. This is done in virtue of a mass of prepared knowledge, slowly accumulated by preceding generations, and which forms part of his social heritage. Primitive man likewise explains things

in terms of current knowledge, but in his case the amount of reliable information is of a very scanty and generally erroneous description. The inherited knowledge which enables a modern schoolboy to start life with what would have been an outfit to an ancient philosopher, had yet to be created. Instead of finding, as we find, tools ready to hand, replies prepared to questions that may arise, primitive mankind must create its own tools and prepare its own answers. And in consequence of this the social environment, which at all times determines the form of man's mental output, is with primitive man radically different from our own. But however the form varies there is agreement on this one point—in both cases phenomena are explained in terms of known forces; the reasoning of each is determined by the knowledge of each. The laws of mental life remain the same in all stages of culture. The brain functions identically whether we take the savage or the scientist. In a general way the savage intelligence is as rational as that of a modern thinker. The difference is dependent upon the accuracy and extent of the information possessed by each. Hence the vital difference in the conclusions reached. Hence, too, the dominance of supernaturalism in primitive times.

The great distinction between primitive and scientific thinking may be expressed in a sentence—the modern mind explains man by the world, primitive thought explained the world by man. In the one case we move from within outward, in the other from without inward. We are not now concerned with semi-metaphysical idealistic theories that would reduce the "whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth" to the creation of mental activity, but with the plain, under-

standable truth that the human organism is fashioned by the environment in which it dwells. And there is amongst those capable of expressing an authoritative opinion—an agreement supported by evidence that has simply nothing against it—that the world of primitive man is overpoweringly animistic. In the absence of that mass of scientifically verified knowledge which forms part of our social heritage, humanity commences its intellectual career by endowing natural forces with the qualities possessed by itself. The forces conceived are living ones. They are to be dreaded exactly as human beings are to be dreaded; to be appeased or circumvented by the same methods that man applies to his fellows. The problem before the savage is thus a very real one. In essence it is the problem that is ever before humanity—that of subjugating forces to its own welfare. Primitive man is not, however, concerned with the elaboration of theories; nor is he consumed with vague 'spiritual yearnings.' His difficulty is how to control or placate those invisible but very real powers upon which he believes everything depends. He would willingly ignore them if he could, and would cheerfully dispense with their presence altogether if he believed that things would proceed as well in their absence. But there they are, inescapable facts that have to be reckoned with.

The general outlook of the primitive mind is well put by Miss Mary Kingsley in the following passage:—

"To the African the Universe is made up of matter permeated by spirit. Everything happens by the direct action of spirit. The thing he does himself is done by the spirit within him acting on his body ... everything

that is done by other things is done by their spirit associated with their particular mass of matter... The native will point out to you a lightning-stricken tree and tell you that its spirit has been killed. He will tell you, when the earthen cooking pot is broken, it has lost its spirit. If his weapon fails him, it is because someone has stolen its spirit or made it weak by means of his influence on spirits of the same class... In every action of his life he shows you how he lives with a great spirit world around him. You see him before he starts out to fight rubbing stuff into his weapon to strengthen the spirit that is in it; telling it the while what care he has taken of it.... You see him leaning over the face of the water talking to its spirit with proper incantations, asking it when it meets an enemy of his to upset his canoe and destroy him.... If a man is knocked on the head with a club, or shot by an arrow or a bullet, the cause of death is clearly the malignity of persons using these weapons; and so it is easy to think that a man killed by the falling of a tree, or by the upsetting of a canoe in the surf, or in a whirlpool in the river is also a victim of some being using these things as weapons. For a man holding this view, it seems both natural and easy to regard disease as a manifestation of the wrath of some invisible being, and to construct that intricate system which we find among the Africans, and agree to call Witchcraft, Fetish, or Juju."*

Miss Kingsley is here dealing specifically with West Africa, but her description applies in a general way to uncivilised people all over the world. There is much closer resemblance between the beliefs of uncivilised peoples than between civilised ones, because

* *West African Studies*, pp. 394–6.

the conditions are much more alike. And under substantially identical conditions the human mind has everywhere reached substantially identical conclusions. The philosophy of the savage is simple, comprehensive, and, given the data, logical. He does not divide the world into the natural and the supernatural; it is all one. At most, he has only the seen and the unseen. The supernatural, as a distinct category, only appears when a definite knowledge of the natural has arisen to which it can be opposed. He has no such distinction as that of the material and the immaterial; so far as he thinks of these things, the invisible is only a finer form of the visible. Of one thing, however, he is perfectly convinced, and this is that he is at all times surrounded by a host of invisible agencies to which all occurrences are due, and with whom he must come to terms. Even death wears a different aspect to the primitive mind from that which it presents to the modern. To us death puts a sharp and abrupt termination to life. To the primitive mind death involves no such ending.* Death is no more of a break than is sleep; and at all times the conception of an annihilation of personality requires a marked degree of mental power. So with the savage—the 'dead' man simply goes on living. He may be incarnated in some natural object, or he may simply go on living as one of the innumerable company of tribal ghosts. But he remains a force to be reckoned with, and the need for dealing with these ghostly personages is one of the ever-present problems of primitive sociology, and

* See an interesting article on this point by W. H. R. Rivers on "The Primitive Conception of Death," in *The Hibbert Journal* for Jan. 1912.

brings us very near the beginnings of all religious beliefs and ceremonies—if it does not form their real starting-point.

On one point all modern schools of anthropologists are agreed. This is that man's first conception of the supernatural—or what afterwards ranks as such—is derived from a purely mistaken interpretation of natural phenomena. In this they have returned to the standpoint of Hobbes, that "fear of things invisible" forms the "natural seed of religion." One source of origin of this belief in a supernatural world is certainly found in the phenomena of dreaming. To the savage his dreams are as real as his waking experiences. He does not *dream* he goes to distant places; he goes there during his sleep. He does not *dream* that people visit him; they actually come. If a West African wakes up in the morning with a tired, bruised feeling, this arises, as Miss Kingsley says, from his 'soul' having been out fighting and got ill-treated. The only philosophy of dreaming amongst savage races is that of the excursions and incursions of a 'soul' or double.

Another powerful factor in the development of belief in the supernatural is that of man's attempt to explain natural happenings. Why do things happen? Why does the sun rise and set, why does rain fall, thunder crash, rivers flow? Note the way in which a child answers similar questions, and one is on the track of the primitive intelligence. If man's own movements are caused by a 'soul' or double, then other things must also move because they possess a 'soul.' If an answer is to be found at all, it is only along these lines that the primitive mind is able to

find it. And, once the answer is given, there are a thousand and one things occurring that lend it apparent support. Resemblances in nature, coincidences, echoes, shadows, etc., all give their support to this primitive hypothesis—the only one possible in the circumstances, and the one still endorsed by the majority of the world's population.

Particularly strong endorsement of this belief is supplied by disease and abnormal nervous states. Instances to illustrate this are innumerable, but from the numerous cases cited by Spencer I select the following: Among the Amazulus convulsions are believed to be caused by ancestral spirits. With Asiatic races epileptics are regarded as possessed by demons. With the Kirghiz the involuntary muscular movements of a woman in childbirth are believed to be caused by a spirit taking possession of the body. The Samoans attribute all madness to possession. The Congo people have the same notion of epilepsy. The East Africans believe that falling sickness is due to spirits.* In Rajputana, says Mr. W. Crook, disease is generally attributed to Khor or the agency of offended spirits. The Mahadeo Kolis of Ahmadnager believe that every malady or disease that seizes man, woman, or child, or cattle, is caused either by evil spirits or by an angry god. The Bijapur Veddas have a yearly feast to their ancestors to prevent the dead bringing sickness into the house.† "A Catholic missionary," says Professor Frazer, "observes that in New Guinea the *nepir*, or sorcerer, is everywhere. . . Nothing happens without the sorcerer's intervention; wars, marriage, death, ex-

* *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i.

† *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, i. p. 124.

peditions, fishing, hunting, always and everywhere the sorcerer."*

In Ancient Egypt, Chaldea, and Assyria there is ample evidence that the same belief flourished. Everywhere we find the exorcist and the witch-doctor existing as natural consequents of the belief that disease has a supernatural origin. We see it in both the teaching and practice of the early Christian Church. That great father of the Church, Origen, says: "It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruption of the air, and pestilence." St. Augustine said that "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons." The Church of England still retains in its Articles an authorisation for the expulsion of demons; and a number of charms yet in wide use amongst civilised nations show how persistent is this belief. For centuries there existed all over Europe sacred pools, wells, grottos, etc., all bearing eloquent witness to the deep-seated belief that disease was of supernatural origin, and was to be conquered by supernatural means.

Enough has been said to indicate the kind of environment in which primitive man moves, and also to understand why ideas concerning the supernatural exert such an enormous influence in early society. In a world where everything was yet to be learned, man's first attempts at understanding himself and his fellows were necessarily blundering and tentative. His first attempts at explanation are expressed in terms of his own nature. He sees himself, his own passions, strengths, and weaknesses reflected in the nature around him. This is the outstanding, dominating fact in primitive life. Leave out this consideration and

* *Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., i. 337.

primitive sociology becomes a chaos. Admit it, and we see the reason why social institutions assumed the form they took, and also a key to much that happens in subsequent human history. In primitive life religious beliefs are not something separate from other forms of social life; so far as man seeks consciously to shape that life they are to him an essential part of it. And the mistake once made is perpetuated. The initial blunder once committed, daily experience seems to give it constant justification. In the absence of knowledge concerning natural forces every event, —particularly if unusual,—every case of disease, endorses and strengthens the mistake made. A psychological fatality drives the human race along the wrong path of investigation, and only very slowly is the mistake rectified. One cannot see how it could have been otherwise. The only corrective is knowledge, and knowledge is a plant of slow growth. This psychological first step was man's first attempt to frame a theory of things satisfactory to his intellect—an attempt that, beginning in the crude animism of the savage, ends in the verifiable laws of modern science.

From the point of view of our present enquiry two things are to be noted. The first is that man's conviction of the nearness of a supernatural world began in his lack of knowledge concerning the nature of natural forces. Of this there can be little doubt. One can take all the facts upon which primitive mankind built, and still builds, its theories of supernaturalism, and show that they may be explained in a quite different manner. The movements of the planets, the rush of comets, the presence of disaster, the thousand and one operations of natural forces no longer suggest

to educated minds the action of personal beings. The whole data of the primitive theory of things have been rejected. The premises were false, and the conclusions necessarily false also.

The second point is that from the earliest times one of the strongest proofs of human contact with a supernatural world has been found in the existence of abnormal or pathological states of mind. These may have sometimes arisen quite naturally; at other times they have been deliberately induced. How much the perpetuation of religious beliefs as a whole owes to this factor has never yet been adequately realised. That it has had a very great influence seems beyond dispute. For it seems certain that had not "proofs" of a supernatural world been offered in the shape of visions, ecstatic states, etc., religious beliefs would hardly have exercised the power that has been theirs. The number of people who are able to maintain a strong consciousness of the truth of religion, merely looking at it as a philosophy of existence, is naturally very few. The great majority require more tangible evidence if their belief is to be kept alive and active. And curiously enough, the very growth of a naturalistic explanation has driven a great many to find the evidence they desired in those abnormal states of mind that seemed to defy scientific analysis. In succeeding chapters evidence will be given to show to what extent this kind of evidence for the supernatural has been offered and accepted. It will be seen, as Professor Tylor points out, that the line of religious development is continuous. The latest forms stretch back in an unbroken line to the earliest. And if this proves nothing else, it at least proves that consequences do

not always die out with the conditions that gave them birth. It was the world of the savage that gave birth to the supernatural. But the supernatural is still with us, even though the world that gave it birth has disappeared. We retain conclusions based on admittedly false premises.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELIGION OF MENTAL DISEASE

"IT IS AN INTERESTING PROBLEM," says Professor J. H. Leuba, "to determine what influences have led theologians to anchor their beliefs upon the proposition that religious experience differs from other forms of consciousness in that it gives one an *immediate* knowledge of the external existence of certain objects of belief, although they do not fall under the senses, and an immediate knowledge of the truth of certain historical facts." * This is, indeed, an interesting problem, and, we may add, one of growing importance, since there is a pronounced tendency on the part of present-day exponents of religion to rest their case almost entirely upon the immediacy of their religious consciousness. This conception of a certain order of experience, however, is not and cannot have always existed. A belief may be so widely and so generally diffused that it is accepted without resistance, and, as it would almost seem, in the absence of evidence. But its intuitive character is only superficial, and disappears on careful examination. The mere vogue of a belief constitutes in itself a kind of evidence, and for many people the most powerful kind of evidence. But the conviction itself has a history, and it is in the unravelling of that history, in the discovery of the class of facts upon which the conviction has been built, that the work lies. And when this is done it will be found that our intuitions are invariably based upon a continuous—even though partly unconscious—appeal to facts. Sometimes it will, of course, be found that a renewed and deliberate appeal to the facts in question will justify the convic-

* *A Psychological Study of Religion*, p. 234.

tion. At other times it will be found that the facts demand an altogether new interpretation. For centuries all the observed facts supported a conviction that the earth was flat. It was a fresh scrutiny of the facts in the light of a new conception that revolutionised human opinion on the subject.

What, then, is the history, and what are the facts upon which the belief that religious experience brings man into contact with a kind of existence not given in ordinary experience, is based? The kind of answer that will be given to this question has already been indicated. Religious beliefs are in their origin of the nature of an induction from an observed order. The induction is not the result of that careful collection of facts, leading up to an equally careful generalisation and subsequent verification, which is a characteristic of modern science, but it is an induction none the less. The primitive mind is not so much engaged in seeking an explanation of certain experiences, as it has an explanation forced upon it. To picture the savage as inventing a theory in the sense in which Darwin propounded the theory of Natural Selection is to quite misconceive the nature of the savage intelligence. But to conceive the savage as having a certain explanation suggested by the pressure of repeated experiences, and that this explanation subsequently assumes the character of a fixed belief, is well within the scope of the facts known to us. In this stage of culture the existence of supernatural beings is as much a deduction from experience as any modern scientific generalisation. Certain things are seen, certain feelings are experienced, and the conclusion is that they are the products of supernatural agency.

From this point of view religion is no more than a primitive science. It is the first stage of that long series of generalisations which, beginning with crude animism, ends with the discoveries of a Copernicus, a Newton, a Darwin, or a Spencer. It is a history that begins with vitalism and ends with mechanism. We commence with a world in which there exists a chaotic assemblage of independent personal forces, and end with a universe that is self-acting, self-adjusting, self-contained, and in which science makes no allowance for the operation of intelligence save such as meets us in animal organisation.

Now amongst the facts that suggest to the primitive intelligence the operation of 'spiritual' forces are those connected with the human organism itself in both its normal and abnormal states. But it is important to note—particularly so for the understanding of the part played by ecstatic religious phenomena in comparatively recent times—that once the occurrence of a certain state of mind is conceived as the product of intercourse between man and spirits, there is every inducement to cultivate these frames of mind whenever renewed intercourse is desired. This does not imply, at least in the earlier stages, conscious imposture. Generally the operator imposes on himself as much as he imposes on others. Noting that privation of body, or torture of mind, or the use of certain herbs is followed by visions or ecstasy, it is believed, not that the vision is the product of the practice, but that the practice is the condition of illumination.

This attitude of mind is fairly paralleled by what takes place at the ordinary spiritualistic *seance*. Those attending are advised that the chief condition of a

communication with the inhabitants of the other world is a passive state of mind. This passivity cannot exclude expectancy, since it is only assumed in order that something may occur. If nothing occurs, if no communications are received, it is because the requisite conditions have not been fulfilled, and the sceptic is met with much semi-scientific jargon as to conditions being necessary to every scientific investigation. The fact that this passivity and expectancy, with other attendant circumstances, not the least of which is the contagious influence of a number of people with a similar mental disposition, opens the way to self-delusion is ignored. Then when the expected and desired result follows, the mental attitude cultivated is taken as the condition of communication with the spiritual world, instead of its being, in all probability, the true cause of what is experienced. In this way the story of supernatural intercourse runs clear and unbroken from primitive savagery to its survival in modern civilisation. When Professor Tylor says, "The conception of the human soul is, as to its most essential nature, continuous from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology,"* he makes a statement that is true of the whole story of supernatural intercourse in all its varied manifestations.

The chief distinction between primitive and modern man lies in the consideration that in the first case the blunder is inevitable, in the latter case the remedy lies to hand. How could primitive man be aware of the real connection between the use of certain drugs or herbs and an excitation or depression of the activities

* *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 501.

of the nervous system? He does observe consequences, but he is quite ignorant of causes. Even to-day their full consequences are unknown; and it is absurd to expect that savage humanity should have been better informed. And even when a more rational theory exists, the practice persists under various forms. This is a principle that receives vivid illustration from the history of religions. The modern believer in mystical states of consciousness no longer advocates the use of drugs, and even fasting is going out of fashion. But we still have a continuation of the primitive practice in the shape of insistence on the cultivation of abnormal frames of mind if we are to experience a consciousness of communion with an alleged supersensible reality. That is, we are to achieve by a mental discipline what the savage or the medieval monk achieved by coarser and more obvious methods. To withdraw the mind from the normal influence of everyday life is to expose it to the play of hallucination and delusion. There is really no vital difference between unhealthy, solitary brooding on a given subject and drugging the mind with hashish. This class of modern mystic is one with the savage in an inability to recognise that the illumination is the product of the discipline, not the mere condition of its possession. Between the drug of the savage, the fasting and self-torture of the medieval monk, and the prayerful meditation of the modern mystic, the difference is only that of changed times and altered conditions. The method is the same throughout.

The truth of this has been well put by Tylor:—

"The religious beliefs of the lower races are in no small measure based on the evidence of visions and

dreams, regarded as actual intercourse with spiritual being. From the earliest stages of culture we find religion in close alliance with ecstatic physical conditions. These are brought on by various means of interference with the healthy action of body and mind, and it is scarcely needful to remind the reader that, according to philosophic theories antecedent to those of modern medicine, such morbid disturbances are explained as symptoms of divine visitation, or at least of superhuman spirituality. Among the strongest means of disturbing the functions of the mind so as to produce ecstatic vision, is fasting, accompanied, as it usually is, with other privations, and with prolonged solitary contemplation in the desert or in the forest. Among the ordinary vicissitudes of savage life, the wild hunter has many a time to try involuntarily the effects of such a life for days together, and under these circumstances he soon comes to see and talk with phantoms which are to him invisible spirits. The secret of spiritual intercourse thus learnt, he has thenceforth but to reproduce the cause in order to renew the effects." *

As a means, then, of strengthening and perpetuating a consciousness of intercourse with the spiritual world, we have to reckon with, not merely the accidental occurrence of abnormal nervous conditions, but with their deliberate cultivation. The practice is world-wide, and persists in some form or other in all ages. Thus we find the Australians and many tribes of North American Indians use tobacco for this purpose. In Western Siberia a species of fungi, the 'fly Agaric,' so called because it is often steeped and the solution used

* *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 410.

to destroy house flies, is used to produce religious ecstasy. Its action on the muscular system is stimulatory, and it greatly excites the nervous system.* An early Spanish observer says of the ancient Mexicans that they used a kind of mushroom, "which are eaten raw, and on account of being bitter, they drink after them, or eat with them a little honey of bees, and shortly after they see a thousand visions."† The mushroom was called the "bread of the gods." The Californian Indians give children tobacco, in order to receive instruction from the resulting visions. North American Indians held intoxication by tobacco to be supernatural ecstasy, and the dreams of men in this state to be inspired. The Darien Indians use the seeds of the Datura Sanguinea to induce visions. In Peru the priests prepared themselves for intercourse with the gods by partaking of a narcotic drink from the same plant. In Guiana the priest was prepared for his functions by fasting and flagellation, and was afterwards dosed with tobacco juice.‡ In India the Laws of Manu give explicit instructions as to the means of producing visions. Chief of these is the use of the 'Soma' drink. This is prepared from the flower of the lotus. The sap of this, says De Candolle, would be poisonous if taken in large quantities, but in small doses merely induces hallucination. Opium and hashish, a preparation of the hemp plant, have been in general use among Eastern peoples, as a means of producing ecstasy from remote antiquity. Opium, it is well known, produces an ex-

* Some very curious information concerning the use of this and other fungi is given by Dr. J. G. Bourke in his *Scatologic Rites*, pp. 69–75.

† Cited by Bourke, p. 90.

‡ Tylor, ii. pp. 417–9.

traordinary state of exaltation, intensifying the sense of one's personality, and inducing a pleasurable consciousness of mental strength and clarity. Under its influence, as De Quincey said, time lengthens to infinity and space swells to immensity.* Belladonna, a drug much used by medieval witches and sorcerers, has also had its vogue for purely religious purposes.

* For a clear account of the effects of hemp preparations, calculated to produce a feeling of religious ecstasy, the reader should consult Dr. Hale White's *Text-Book of Pharmœcology*, 1901, pp. 318–22. The effects of opium are thus described by another writer: "Opium, in those who are capable of stimulation by it, gives rise to a pleasurable feeling, something like that which is produced by wine in not excessive doses; but the excitement derived from it, instead of tending to some highest point, remains stationary for hours, and in place of the slight incoherence of thought always present in those who are exhilarated with wine, the most perfect harmony is established among all the conceptions. There is an extraordinary stimulation of the pure intellect, and not merely of the power of expression. The opium-eater seems to have had the eyes of his spirit opened, to have acquired a gift of insight into things that to mere mortals are inexplicable. The most remote parts of consciousness come into clear light; the finer shades of personality, those that had been unknown even to the opium-eater himself, are brought into view and become distinct; the smallest details of the things around take new significance, and are seen to be profoundly important; their analogies with other phenomena of nature are revealed. It is the same with the moral as with the intellectual being; that also becomes indefinitely exalted. An absolute balance of the faculties seems to have been attained. The whole man *is* what in his ordinary state he only tends to be; he has realised the highest perfection of which he is capable; only his 'best self' now remains; his lower self has been left behind without need of the purgatorial fire of contention with the environment to destroy it."—T. Whittaker, *Essays and Notices, Psychological and Philosophical*, p. 367.

With the Greeks the laurel was sacred to Æsculapius. Those who wished to ask counsel of the god appeared before the altar crowned with laurel and chewing its leaves. Before prophesying, the Greek priestesses drank a preparation of laurel water. This contains, although it was, of course, unknown to them, two toxic substances—prussic acid and the volatile oil of laurel. The first would induce convulsions, the second, hallucinatory visions. The two combined were calculated to produce with both subject and observer a profound impression of spiritual illumination and possession.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples of the action of various drugs or herbs on the nervous system, or to cite the people who use them. Enough has been said to indicate how widespread is the practice, and the consequences are not hard to foresee. A very moderate development of intelligence would enable men to associate certain consequences with the use of particular drugs, but a very considerable amount of knowledge would be required to explain why these consequences were produced. In a social environment saturated with superstition the explanation lies ready to hand, and is accepted without question. A people that sees spiritual agency in all the familiar phenomena of nature are certainly not less likely to trace its influence in the mysterious and unaccountable effects of narcotics and stimulants. And each repeated experiment provides additional proof. Man thus not only believes himself to be surrounded by a spiritual world; he is actually able to enter into communication with it by methods that are defined in the clearest possible manner. Every repetition strengthens the delusion and

even when the delusion, as such, is exploded, the temper of mind induced by it persists.

Various other methods are employed to induce a feeling of religious exaltation. Prominent among these are dancing and singing. Dancing in connection with religious ceremonies is now generally outgrown in the civilised world, but singing is still the vogue. That is, singing is not, it must be remembered, practised from any desire to cultivate a love of music, although it may appeal to music-lovers. Still, its avowed purpose is to induce a feeling of devoutness in the congregation. The hypnotic consequences of a body of people singing in unison, or the soothing, mystical effect of certain airs from a choir upon a congregation, are recognised in practice if not in theory. This is a phenomenon that is not, of course, exclusively associated with religion In this as in other instances religion only utilises the ordinary qualities of human nature. But in all cases the purpose and the result are the same. That is, the subject is placed for the time being in a supernormal condition, and the mild state of passivity or enthusiasm created makes him more susceptible to the influence brought to bear upon him. This is true of religious singing and chanting, from the forest gatherings of the primitive savage down to the more sedate and elaborate assemblages in church or chapel.

Primitive dancing had both a sexual and religious significance, although, as will be seen later, in the primitive mind the sexual functions themselves are very closely associated with supernatural agency. Tylor is of opinion that originally men and women dance in order to express their feelings and wishes,*

* *Anthropology*, p. 296.

but it is certain it very early and universally became associated with religious ceremonies, and that because of the ecstasy induced. In some cases drug-taking and dancing go together. In others, reliance is placed on dancing alone. This latter is the case with the 'devil dancers' of Ceylon. In Africa the witch doctor discovers who has been guilty of sorcery by the aid of inspiration furnished during a dance. The whirling dance of the Eastern dervish is well known. Dancing also figures in the Bible. The Jews danced around the golden calf (Ex. xxxii. 19) in a state of nudity. David, too, danced naked before the Lord. Dancing was also part of the religious ceremonies attendant on the worship of Dionysos or Bacchus.* Along with the drinking of certain vegetable decoctions, dancing formed an important part of the witches' saturnalia during the medieval period. When in a state of frenzy, partly drug induced and partly the product of exhilaration caused by wild dancing, visions of Satan followed. In the dancing mania of the fourteenth century, the sufferers saw visions of heaven opened, with Jesus and the Virgin enthroned. Dancing was one of the prominent characteristics of the French Convulsionnaires in the eighteenth century. In more recent times we have the dancing and singing connected with the Methodist revival. In modern instances the dancing seems to have been consequent on religious excitement rather than precedent to it, but in earlier times there is no doubt that it was deliberately practised as a means of producing a state of exaltation.

Among the commonest methods of inducing a sense

* For a general account of religious dances, see Major-General Forlong's *Faiths of Man*, art. "Dancing."

of religious exaltation is the practice of fasting. In various guises, this is the most persistent form of religious self-torture. Amongst more civilised people the reason given for fasting is that it is a form of repentance, the genuineness of which is attested by voluntary punishment. But originally there seems little reason to doubt that it was adopted for a different purpose. It was valued not because the fasting person felt that he had done anything for which it was necessary to repent, but because it was believed to bring people into closer touch with the spiritual world. There is, of course, a very obvious reason for this belief. A lowered vitality is favourable to hallucinations of every description. A shipwrecked sailor is placed, by no act of his own, in precisely the same condition as is the primitive medicine man or the medieval saint by his own volition. It has always been recognised, and by none more readily than by the great religious teachers of the world, that a well-nourished body is inimical to what they chose to term "spiritual development." The historic Christian outcry against fleshly indulgence has much more in it than a revolt against mere sensualism. A well-fed body has been deprecated because it closed the avenue to spiritual illumination. Hence it is that fasting has found such favour in all religious systems. The ascetic saw more because, by reducing the body to an abnormal state, he provided the conditions for seeing more. The Zulu maxim, "A stuffed body cannot see secret things," really expresses in a sentence the philosophy of the matter.

Among the Blackfoot Indians of North America, when a boy reaches puberty he is sent away from

his father's lodge in search of a spiritual protector or totem. Seeking a secluded spot, he abstains from food until he is favoured in a dream with a vision of some animal or bird, which is at once adopted by him.* This custom obtains with most of the North American tribes. Among these tribes, also, the soothsayer prepares himself by fasting for the ecstatic state in which the spirits give their messages through him. The ordinary member of the tribe who wants anything will fast until he is assured in a dream that it will be granted him. Similarly, the Malay, to procure supernatural intercourse, retires to the jungle and abstains from food. The Zulu doctor prepares for intercourse with the tribal spirits by spare diet or solitary fasts. Fasting is part of the ordinary regimen of the Hindu yogi. Of certain Indian tribes we are told that before proceeding on an expedition they "observe a rigorous fast, or rather abstain from every kind of food for four days. In this interval their imagination is exalted to delirium; whether it be through bodily weakness or the natural effect of delirium, they pretend to have strange visions. The elders and sages of the tribe, being called upon to interpret these dreams, draw from them omens more or less favourable to the success of the enterprise; and their explanations are received as oracles, by which the expedition will be faithfully regulated."† Amongst the Samoans, when rain was required, the priests blackened themselves all over, exhumed a dead body, took the skeleton to a cave and poured water over it. They had to fast and remain in the cave until it rained. Sometimes they

* Catlin, *North American Indians*, i. p. 36.

† Cited by Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 161.

died under the experiment, but they generally chose the showery months for their rain-making.*

In both the Old and New Testaments fasting figures largely. The encounter of Jesus with Satan is preceded by a forty days' fast. St. Catherine of Sienna began regular fasts at a very early age. Santa Teresa kept lengthy fasts every year. The fasting of the monks and nuns during the epidemic period of monasticism is too well known to call for more than a mere reference. Perhaps the most curious religious reason given for fasting is that cited by a writer from a monkish chronicler:—

"As a coach goes faster when it is empty, a man by fasting can be better united to God; for it is a principle with geometers that a round body can never touch a plane except in one point. . . . A belly too well filled becomes round, it cannot touch God except in one point; but fasting flattens the belly until it is united with the surface of God at all points."†

George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, confesses that he "fasted much" and "walked abroad in solitary places," and "frequently in the night walked about mournfully by myself." After much brooding and fasting, he heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition." Such an experience is not at all surprising, seeing the method pursued to acquire it. Less fasting and brooding, with more genial intercourse with his fellows, might easily have prevented Fox, as it has prevented others, hearing heavenly voices proffering him counsel. Such an experience is well within the reach of any

* Turner's *Samoa*, p. 345–6.

† Brady, *Clavis Calendaria*, vol. i. p. 223.

one who cares to acquire it. Tylor has well said that "So long as fasting is continued as a religious rite, so long the consequences in morbid mental exaltation will continue the old savage doctrine that morbid phantasy is supernatural experience. Bread and meat would have robbed the ascetic of many an angel's visit; the opening of the refectory door must many a time have closed the gate of heaven to his gaze." No one will question the truth of this principle, so long as we are dealing with uncivilised mankind. Many, however, shrink from acknowledging that the practices current in more civilised times are disguised illustrations of the same principle of interpretation, which descends direct from savages, and but for them would never have existed.

Commenting on the practices of certain savage medicine-men, a missionary remarks:—

"It always appeared probable to me that these rogues, from long fasting, contract a weakness of brain, a giddiness, a kind of delirium, which makes them imagine that they are gifted with superior wisdom, and give themselves out for physicians. They impose upon themselves first, and afterwards upon others."*

This is shrewdly said, and is a good example of the readiness with which obvious truths are recognised when they do not clash with religious prepossessions. The difficulty for others is to discern any real line of demarcation between the practices of civilised and uncivilised. So far as one can see, the only real distinction is that the method employed by savages is open. That followed by civilised people is more or less disguised. But derangement of function is derange-

* Cited by Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii. pp. 412–3.

ment of function, no matter how produced. And if we decline to believe that a savage holds genuine intercourse with a spiritual world, as a consequence of this derangement, in what way are we justified in accepting the testimony of a Christian visionary to similar intercourse, when the derangement is in his case no less clear? It is a case of accepting both, or neither. The sane and scientific conclusion seems to lie in the following from Dr. Henry Maudsley:—

"Now that the mental functions are known to be inseparably connected with nervous substrata, disposed and united in the brain in the most orderly fashion, superordinate, co-ordinate, and subordinate —the whole a complex organisation of confederate nerve centres, each capable of more or less independent action—a natural interpretation presents itself. The extraordinary states of mental disintegration evince the separate and irregular function of certain mental nerve tracts, or grouped nerve tracts with which goes necessarily a coincident suspension, partial or complete, of the functions of all the rest; the supernatural incubus, therefore, neither demoniac nor divine, only morbid. Thus the strange nervous seizures, with their mental concomitants, not being outside the range of positive research, but interesting events within it, become useful natural experiments to throw an instructive light upon the intricate functions of the most complex organ in the world—the human brain. Steadily are the researches of pathology driving the supernatural back into its last and most obscure retreat; for they prove that in the extremest ecstasies there is neither *theolepsy* nor *diabolepsy*, nor any other *lepsy* in the sense of possession of the individual by

an external power; what there is truly is a *psycholepsy.*"*

States of exaltation produced by the aid of drugs, fasting, or other forms of self-torture come naturally under the category of deliberately induced states of mind, owing to the conviction that spiritual knowledge may be gained in this way. But there are other states that arise naturally and which foster the same conviction. It has already been pointed out that the generally accepted theory with uncivilised peoples is that all disease is due to the action of malevolent spirits. There is no need now to repeat proof of this, and in any case it lies to hand in any work that deals with uncivilised life. Nor need we go back to uncivilised times for evidence. One requires only to look but a very little way into the history of any country to find the supernaturalistic theory of disease in full swing, and even to-day one may discover indications of its once general rule. Its importance to the present enquiry lies in the part it has played in building up in the religious consciousness a general conviction of religious truth that does not disappear even when it is seen that the evidence upon which it rests is faulty. Just as the inhabitants of a Welsh village have their general belief in religion strengthened by the semi-hysterical speeches of an Evan Roberts, and the convulsive capers of a whole congregation, so in all ages people have found endorsement of their belief in a supernatural world in the existence of cases the pathological nature of which admits of no doubt. Belief in the supernatural character of specific nervous conditions or mental states may disappear, but the fact

* *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, p. 277.

that this belief has been general for a time leaves behind a certain psychological residuum in favour of supernaturalism in general.

The connection between the priest and the physician is naturally a very ancient one. The priest, indeed, is the primitive physician, the belief that diseases are supernaturally caused indicating him as the agent of their cure. And it is only to be expected that when the attempt is made to divert the treatment of disease from priestly hands the effort should be met with determined opposition. Quite naturally, too, the first gropings after a scientific theory of disease show a curious mixture of rationalism and superstition. Thus, in Greece, the temple hospitals devoted to the mythical Æsculapius, which were situated at Epidaurus, Pergamus, Cyrene, Corinth, and many other places, served as colleges, hospitals, and places of worship. Sufferers slept in the temples in the hopes of receiving messages from the gods, and the priests themselves professed to have ecstatic visions which enabled them to prescribe for those afflicted.* Great emphasis was placed on bathing, light, air, and food, and it is pretty clear that the priests had begun to mix both faith and physic in a most perplexing manner.

The definite separation of medicine from magic and religion begins with Hippocrates. His theory of disease was simple. He did not deny that there might be a supernatural side to disease; he insisted that there was always a natural one, and that this was the side with which we should be concerned. Each disorder,

* A very good account of the methods followed in these places will be found in Miss Hamilton's *Incubation, or the Cure of Diseases in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches*, 1906.

he said, had its own physical conditions, and he laid down the rule that we "ought to study the nature of man, what he is with reference to that which he eats and drinks, and to all his other occupations and habits, and to the consequences resulting from each."* In Egypt, also, very considerable advance was made in the same direction. Probably a good deal of their knowledge resulted from the practice of embalming, in spite of the priestly interdict on dissection. At all events, there is no doubt that considerable advance had been made. Herophilus and Erasistratus wrote of the structure of the heart, and described its connection with the veins and arteries. The two kinds of nerves, motor and sensory, were described, and the influence of foods, etc., as influencing health, dwelt on. Insanity was also dealt with as due to natural and controllable causes, and the effects of colour and music in dealing with mania noted.† Had this advance been followed, the history of European civilisation might have been different from what it was. Plagues, epidemics, and diseases, with their far-reaching social and political consequences,—consequences that are too little noted, or even understood, by historians,—might have met with adequate resistance, and some would never have occurred.

* Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 359 and vol. v. p. 232.

† "The ancient Egyptians and Greeks," says Dr. Maudsley, "used humane and rational methods of treatment; it was only after the Christian doctrine of possession by devils had taken hold of the minds of men that the worst sort of treatment, of which history gives account, came into force" (*Pathology of Mind*, p. 523). For a general account of Egyptian medicine see the chapter on Egypt in Dr. Berdoe's *Origin and Growth of the Healing Art*.

The Pagan schools of medicine came to an untimely, although in some cases a lingering, end. "The introduction of Christianity," says a medical writer, "had an undoubted influence on the course of medical science; for the Christian was taught to recognise, in every bodily infirmity, the dispensation of the Almighty, and in the calm, abstracted pursuits of those holy men who passed their time in prayer and meditation, a propitiation: hence medicine fell into the hands of monks and anchorites, who assumed to themselves, exclusively, the power of interpreting all natural phenomena as indications of the Divine Will, and pretended to possess some occult and supernatural means of curing disease."* Reversing the natural order of things, the physician was replaced by the priest. The supernaturalistic theory was revived, and held its own for well on a thousand years. For every complaint the Church provided a specific in the shape of a charm, an incantation, or a saint. St. Apollonia for toothache, St. Avertin for lunacy, St. Benedict for stone, St. Clara for sore eyes, St. Herbert for hydrophobia, St. John for epilepsy, St. Maur for gout, St. Persel for agues, St. Genevieve for fevers, St. Sebastian for plague, etc.† The height of absurdity was reached when, in spite of the monopoly of the treatment of disease by the priesthood, the Council of Rheims (1119) actually forbade monks to study medicine. This was followed by the Council of Beziers (1246) prohibiting Christians applying for relief to Jewish physicians, at a time when practically the only doctors of ability in Christendom were Jews. In 1243

*Meryon, *The History of Medicine*, vol. i. p. 67.
†*Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 104.

the Dominicans banished all books on medicine from their monasteries. Innocent III. forbade physicians practising except under the supervision of an ecclesiastic. Honorius (1222) forbade priests the study of medicine; and at the end of the thirteenth century Boniface VIII. interdicted surgery as atheistical. The ill-treatment and opposition experienced by the great Vesalius at the hands of the Church, on account of his anatomical researches, is one of the saddest chapters in the history of science.*

When the sight of bodily disease strengthened and confirmed belief in the supernatural, mental disease must have offered still more convincing evidence. Among uncivilised people we know that this is so. To quote again from the indispensable Tylor:—

"The possessed man . . . rationally finds a spiritual cause for his sufferings. . . . Especially when the mysterious unseen power throws him helpless on the ground, jerks and writhes him in convulsions, makes him leap upon the bystanders with a giant's strength and a wild beast's ferocity, impels him with distorted face and frantic gesture, and voice not his own nor seemingly even human, to pour forth wild incoherent raving, or with thought and eloquence beyond his sober faculties to command, to counsel, to foretell—such a one seems to those who watch him, and even to himself, to have become the mere instrument of a spirit which has seized him or entered into him, a possessing demon in whose personality the patient believes so implicitly that he often imagines a personal name for it, which it can declare when it speaks in

* See Sir Michael Foster's *Lectures on the History of Physiology*, chap. i.

its own voice and character through his organs of speech."*

It was this conception of insanity, universally current in the uncivilised world, that was revived with fearful intensity in the early Christian Church, and which certainly served its purpose in intensifying the genuine belief in supernaturalism. Jesus had given His followers power to expel demons "In My name," and this power of exorcism was one upon which the early Christians specially prided themselves. It is with unconscious sarcasm that Dean Trench puts the question, If one of the disciples "were to enter a madhouse now, how many of the sufferers there he might recognise as 'possessed'?"† One may safely say that he would regard all as under the dominion of evil spirits. No other cause of insanity appears to have been recognised, and the Church devised the most elaborate formulæ for casting out demons. The assumed demoniac was prayed over, incensed, and evil-smelling drugs burned under his nose. A set form of objurgation then followed:—

"Thou lustful and stupid one. . . . Thou lean sow, famine-stricken and most impure. . . . Thou wrinkled beast, of all beasts the most beastly. . . . Thou bestial and foolish drunkard. . . . Thou sooty spirit from Tartarus. . . . I cast thee down, O Tartarean boor, into the infernal kitchen. . . . Loathsome cobbler . . . filthy sow . . . envious crocodile. . . . Malodorous drudge . . . swollen toad . . . lousy swineherd," etc. etc.‡

**Primitive Culture*, ii. 124. †*On the Miracles*, p. 168.

‡ Cited by White, who gives original authorities, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, ii. 107.

Then followed the exorcism proper:—

"By the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, which God hath given to make known unto His servants those things which are shortly to be . . . I exorcise you, ye angels of untold perversity. . . . May all the devils that are thy foes rush forth upon thee and drag thee down to hell! . . . May the Holy One trample on thee and hang thee up in an infernal fork, as was done to the five kings of the Amorites! . . . May God set a nail to your skull, and pound it with a hammer as Jael did to Sisera! . . . May Sother break thy head and cut off thy hands, as was done to the cursed Dagon! . . . May God hang thee in a hellish yoke, as seven men were hanged by the sons of Saul!" *

Marcus Aurelius mentions as one of his debts to the philosopher Diognetus that he had taught him "not to give credit to vulgar tales of prodigies and incantations, and evil spirits cast out by magicians or pretenders to sorcery, and such kind of impostors." † What would have been the thoughts of the great emperor, could he have revisited the earth two centuries after his death and seen the then civilised world enveloped in a mental atmosphere in which such ideas as those above described could live?

All over Europe for centuries lunatics were whipped, and otherwise ill-treated, in the hopes of expelling the demons that were troubling them. The seventy-second Canon of the Church of England still provides that no unlicensed person shall "cast out any devil or devils" under pain of penalties prescribed. A Bishop of Beauvais, in the fifteenth century, not only caused five devils to come out of one person, but

* White, ii. 108.

† *Meditations*, bk. i.

actually induced them to sign a document promising not to molest this particular sufferer again. Tremendous, again, were the labours of the Jesuit Fathers of Vienna, who boasted that they had cast out no less than 12,652 'living devils.' Such arithmetical exactitude silences all hostile comment. In some parts of Scotland, as late as 1783, lunatics were left all night in the churchyard, with a holy bell over their heads. In Cornwall, St. Nun's pool was famous for the cure of lunatics. The poor devils were tied hand and foot and doused in the water until they were cured—or killed. Even the embraces of prostitutes, for some peculiar reason, were recommended as a cure for insanity.* In 1788, in Bristol, a drunken epileptic, one George Larkins, was brought into church, and seven clergymen solemnly set themselves to the task of exorcising the possessing demon. Whereupon Satan swore 'by his infernal den'—an oath, says the chronicler, nowhere to be found but in Bunyan. Under date of October 25, 1739, John Wesley also relates how he was sent for and assisted at the expulsion of a demon from the body of a young girl.

Of all nervous diseases that of epilepsy appears to have been most favourable to the encouragement of a belief in spiritual agency. One medical authority whose experience enables him to speak with a peculiar degree of authority has pointed out that with epilepsy there is often an exaltation of the religious sentiments.† A more recent writer, Dr. Bernard Holl-

*Fort's *Medical Economy during the Middle Ages*, p. 345.

† Dr. Howden, Medical Superintendent of the Montrose Lunatic Asylum, in *Journal of Mental Science*, 1873.

ander, asserts that epileptics are "highly religious."* Sir T. S. Clouston also points out that strong religious emotionalism often accompanies epilepsy.† Another eminent physician, while pointing out that "a high degree of intelligence, amounting even to genius, has in some cases been associated with epilepsy," observes that "the epileptic is apt to be influenced greatly by the mystical and awe-inspiring, and he is disposed to morbid piety."‡

Every medical man is acquainted with the close relation that exists between epilepsy and all kinds of hallucinations and delusions, and it would be more than surprising if in an environment where the religious interpretation of things is paramount, or with a patient of strong religious convictions, these delusions did not take a religious form. And of all nervous disorders epilepsy seems most favourable for producing this. Under its influence hallucination attacks everyone of the senses with a varying degree of intensity. "The patient hears voices, and generally words expressing definite ideas, though he is often unable to properly refer them to any speaking person. Sometimes instead of external sounds or voices, the patient has a consciousness of an internal voice that may be as real to him as any external auditory perception. At first the voices may be indistinct, but upon constant repetition and evolution from subconscious thought they acquire intensity, eventually dominating the life of the individual." § Dr. Ball says:

* *First Signs of Insanity*, p. 293. † *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, p. 428. The whole of chapter xi. is very pertinent. ‡ Dr. R. Jones, in Allbutt's *System of Medicine*, vol. viii. p. 335. § Dr. Hollander, *First Signs of Insanity*, pp. 64–5.

"One patient perceives at the beginning of theattack a toothed wheel,in the middle of which there appears a human face making strange contortions; another sees a series of smiling landscapes. In some cases it is the sense of hearing which is affected;—the patient hears voices or strange noises. Others are warned by the sense of smell that the fit is going to commence."*

Sometimes these hallucinations of sight and hearing are in curious contrast with each other. "Not rarely," says Dr. Connolly Norman, "a patient has visual hallucinations of a cheering kind—as of God or angels; yet his auditory hallucinations are full of blasphemy, mockery, and insult."†

Dr. Maudsley thus describes the general symptoms accompanying an epileptic attack:—

"The patient's senses are possessed with hallucinations, his ganglionic central cells being in a state of what may be called convulsive action; before the eyes are blood-red flames of fire, amidst which whoever happens to present himself appears as a devil or otherwise horribly transformed; the ears are filled with a terribly roaring noise, or resound with a voice imperatively commanding him to save himself; the smell is one of sulphurous stifling, and the desperate and violent actions are the convulsive reaction to such fearful hallucinations." ‡

If anyone will bear in mind the numerous descrip-

* Cited by Ireland, *The Blot on the Brain*, p. 39. † Allbutt's *System of Medicine*, viii. 395. ‡ *Physiology of Mind*, p. 251. See also Dr. Mercier's *The Nervous System and the Mind*, p. 55.

tions of religious visions, written in all good faith, and the behaviour of many an assumed 'inspired' character, he will have little difficulty in realising how easily, to a people unacquainted with the real character of such phenomena, epilepsy lends itself to a religious interpretation. It must also be borne in mind that the consequences of vivid hallucinations experienced during epilepsy do not always disappear with the attack to which they were originally due.

It is certain that from the earliest times cases of what are undoubtedly epilepsy have been taken as positive indications of supernatural influence. "There is," says Emanuel Deutsch, "a peculiar something supposed to inhere in epilepsy. The Greeks called it a divine disease. Bacchantic and chorybantic furor were God-inspired stages. The Pythia uttered her oracles under the most distressing signs. Symptoms of convulsion were ever needed as a sign of the divine."* Much of the evidence for the supernatural in the New Testament rests upon cases that are obviously pathological in character. A man brings his son to Jesus and describes how "ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water" (Matt. xvii. 15), and in another place (Mark ix. 18) the same patient is described as having a dumb spirit, "and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." The response to the father's appeal for help is an exorcism of the possessing spirit such as one meets with in all savage culture. Between possession by a malignant spirit and domination by a god, the difference is clearly

* *Literary Remains*, p. 83.

one of terminology alone. And at the side of the New Testament case just cited one may place this account from Polynesia, written by a very competent observer, and a missionary:—

"As soon as the god was supposed to have entered the priest, the latter became violently agitated and worked himself up to the highest pitch of apparent frenzy; the muscles of the limbs seemed convulsed, the body swelled, the countenance became terrific, the features distorted, the eyes wild and strained. In this state he often rolled on the earth, foaming at the mouth, as if labouring under the influence of the divinity by whom he was possessed, and in shrill cries, and often violent and indistinct sounds, revealed the will of the god." *

Advancing to a higher culture stage than that indicated in the last passage, there is much evidence that Mohammed was subject to hallucinations, and many authorities have indicated epilepsy as their source. There is a tradition that someone who saw Mohammed while he was receiving one of his revelations observed that he seemed unconscious and was red in the face. Mohammed himself said:—

"Inspiration descendeth upon me in two ways. Sometimes Gabriel cometh and communicateth the revelation unto me, as one man unto another, and this is easy; at other times it affecteth me like the ringing of a bell, penetrating my very heart, and rending me as it were in pieces; and this it is which grievously afflicteth me."

Emanuel Deutsch, although, in a passage al-

* W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, ii. 235–6.

ready cited, recognising the religious significance attached to epilepsy, has the following curious comment:—

"Mohammed was epileptic; and vast ingenuity and medical knowledge have been lavished upon this point as explanatory of Mohammed's mission and success. We, for our own part, do not think that epilepsy ever made a man appear a prophet to himself or even to the people of the East; or, for the matter of that, inspired him with the like heart-moving words and glorious pictures. Quite the contrary. It was taken as a sign of demons within—demons, 'Devs,' devils to whom all manner of diseases were ascribed throughout the antique world."

This seems very largely to miss the point at issue. Of course, no one would claim that Mohammed's success was due to epilepsy, or even that the very severe forms of epilepsy were favourable to inducing a conviction of revelation. But the disease assumes various forms, and in some cases it is expressed in the form of a period of mental excitement and general irritability. All that is claimed is that, given the complaint in its less severe forms in one with whom religious beliefs are strong, there are present all the conditions for attributing the resulting hallucinations to personal revelation or ecstatic vision. And it is also true that while some patients after emerging from a fit of epilepsy are in a dazed or confused condition, others have a very clear recollection of all they have seen and heard. Mohammed simply took the current explanation of cases of nervous derangement, and being a man of strong religious feeling, naturally gave his visions a religious interpretation. All the rest has to be

explained in terms of the innate genius of the man and of the circumstances of his time.

A similar case to the above is that of Emanuel Swedenborg. His followers naturally resent the ascription of his visions and voices to a pathologic origin, and point to his pronounced mental ability. And certainly no one who is at all acquainted with the writings of Swedenborg will question his great mental power, amounting at times to positive genius. But here, again, we have strong religious conviction in alliance with pathological conditions. Swedenborg's communications with celestial beings were of a more frequent and more ordered character than Mohammed's, but there is the same general likeness between them. Of his first revelation he writes :—

"At ten o'clock I lay down in bed and was somewhat better; half an hour after I heard a clamour under my head; I thought that then the tempter went away; immediately there came over me a rigor so strong from the head and the whole body, with some din, and this several times. I found that something holy was over me. I thereupon fell asleep, and at about twelve, one, or two o'clock in the night there came over me so strong a shivering from head to foot, as if many winds rushed together, which shook me, was indescribable, and prostrated me upon my face. Then, while I was prostrated, I was in a moment quite awake, and saw that I was cast down, and wondered what it meant. And I spoke as if I was awake, but found that the word was put into my mouth, and I said, 'Omnipotent Jesus Christ, as of Thy great grace Thou condescendest to come to so great a sinner, make me worthy of this grace!' I held my hands together and prayed,

and then came a hand which squeezed my hands hard; immediately thereupon I continued in prayer."*

Swedenborg confessed to repeated walks and talks with celestial visitants, and, of course, all thought of imposture must be put on one side. What one has to consider is whether we are to accept these experiences as hallucinations or not. On the one side no further evidence seems possible than the profound faith of the man himself, his recognised mental ability, and the belief of his followers. And against this it must be urged that the most complete honesty is no guarantee against self-deception, while ability and even genius are not at all incompatible with a pathologic strain. And in addition it must be borne in mind that these hallucinations are, after all, part of a very large class. Men of very little ability and influence experience substantially the same visions; they occur all over the world, under all conditions of culture, and always express the personal idiosyncrasies of the subject and reflect the character of his social environment. One may safely say that had Swedenborg lived a century later, while he might still have gone through the same mental and physical experiences, he himself would have given a very different interpretation of them.

St. Paul, Professor James points out, "certainly had once an epileptoid, if not an epileptic seizure." One needs to add to this that the seizure occurred at the one critical moment of his life which eventuated in his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Mary Magdalene, the first who brought tidings of the resurrection,

* Dr. H. Maudsley has gone fully into the case of Swedenborg in an article in the *Journal of Mental Science* for July and October 1869, since reprinted in his *Body and Mind.*

had been delivered of seven devils. Luther's religious opinions were, of course, quite apart from his physical state, sound or unsound. Still, even with him the reality of supernatural intercourse became intensely vivid as a result of nervous affections. His latest biographer points out that as a youth while in the monastery he was seized with something that might well have been an epileptic fit, and that although there is no record of a return of this, he did suffer from ordinary fits of fainting.* He confesses to have been much troubled, at twenty-two years of age, with giddiness and noises in the ear, which he attributed to the devil. And right through his life he attributed similar experiences to the same source. Bunyan confesses that even during childhood the Lord "did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrify me with dreadful visions." George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, describes how, in the middle of winter, when approaching Lichfield, "the Word of the Lord was like a fire in me," and as he went through the town, "there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood." Reflecting on the meaning of the vision, he remembered that, "In the Emperor Diocletian's time a thousand Christians were martyred at Lichfield. So I was to go without my shoes through the channel of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the blood of these martyrs which had been shed above a thousand years before." †

* See *Luther*, by H. Grisar, 1913, vol. i. pp. 16–7.

† For other cases, and a general account of the relations between pathologic states and religious delusion, see Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, chap. iv. pt. iii.

In none of these cases could it be fairly claimed that the religious conviction, as such, was the consequence of the hallucinations experienced. But it can scarcely be questioned that these served to strengthen it to an enormous extent. These trances, ecstasies, visions, were accepted by the subjects as proofs of their 'divine mission,' and were so accepted by multitudes of their followers. In their absence religion would most probably have failed to be the fiercely irruptive force in life that it has been. The religious idea has, so to speak given hallucination a standing and an authority in life it would not have possessed in its absence. In the case of men of ordinary capacity these visions possess little authority. But in the case of men of extraordinary capacity, men like Luther, Mohammed, Fox, Swedenborg,—who must in any case have stood superior to their fellows,—these hallucinations are then under favouring social conditions invested with enormous authority. And there is no doubt about the fact that religious leaders have been peculiarly subject to these psychical variations. This is pointed out by Professor James in the following passage:—

"Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have

helped to give them their religious authority and influence."*

Well, in what way are we to discriminate between the visions of a religious person, admittedly of an abnormal disposition, subject to fits of melancholy, etc., and presenting "all sorts of peculiarities ordinarily classed as pathological," and the hallucinations of an admittedly pathologic subject? Why should the ordinary classification break down at this point? Dr. Granger, dealing with this aspect of the question, says: "The religious genius is not proved to be morbid by the extent to which he diverges from the average type."† Quite so, genius *must* depart from the average type in order to be genius. But the statement is quite beside the point at issue. It is not a mere divergence from the average type that warrants one in assuming that much passing for divine illumination owes its origin to pathological conditions, but the fact that it is possible to affiliate certain cases of religious exaltation with these conditions. Hallucinations are common to all forms of ecstasy, and ecstasy is not confined to religion. Given a one-sided mental activity, intense concentration on one or a few analogous ideas, combined with a lowered nervous sensibility, and we have all the conditions present favourable to hallucination.‡ These hallucinations may occur in connection with any topic that engrosses the subject's mind. In every other direction their true nature is recognised and admitted. In connection with religious belief alone, it is held that they bring the subject into touch with a

* *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 6–7. † *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 13. ‡ See Parish's *Hallucinations and Illusions*, pp. 38–9.

supersensual world of reality. What possible scientific warranty is there for any such distinction?

Let us take, as an example, one of James's own cases, which he admits is 'distinctly pathological,' but without allowing this admission to disturb his general conclusion. The case is that of Suso, a famous fourteenth-century mystic. As a young man he wore a hair shirt and an iron chain next the skin. Later he had made a leathern garment studded with one hundred and fifty nails, points inward. The garment was made very tight, and he used it to sleep in. To prevent himself throwing it off during sleep he procured a pair of leather gloves studded with tacks, so that if he attempted to get rid of the dress the tacks would penetrate his flesh. Next he had made a wooden cross, with thirty protruding nails, to emulate the sufferings of Jesus. He procured an old door to sleep on. In winter he suffered from the frost. His feet were full of sores, his legs became dropsical, his knees bloody and seared, his loins covered with scars, his hands tremulous. During twenty years he fed scantily upon the coarsest food, slept in the most uncomfortable places, and during the whole of the time never took a bath. No wonder that after his fortieth year he was favoured with a series of visions from God. Would not one be surprised if any other result than this had been achieved? And Suso's case is only one of thousands, many of not so extreme a character, others quite as bad.

In the case of Catherine of Sienna the austerities began earlier than with Suso. As a child she flogged herself, and was favoured with visions before she reached her teens. Santa Teresa, as a young woman, prayed

to God to send her an illness, and describes how she remained for days in a trance, during which time her tongue was bitten in many places. She describes how, during these trances, her body became to her light, and she remained rigid. "It was altogether impossible for me to hinder it; for my world would be carried absolutely away, and ordinarily even my head, as it were, after it."* These are typical examples from a very large number of cases. The annals of monasticism are filled with accounts of self-inflicted tortures, with the one end in view, and in serious belief that their experiences brought them into touch with a reality denied them under normal conditions. The practice not only quickened their own sense of the reality of religion, it served the same purpose for thousands of others pursuing the course of ordinary social existence. "Religious teachers," says Francis Galton, "by enforcing celibacy, fasting, and solitude, have done their best towards making men mad, and they have always largely succeeded in inducing morbid mental conditions among their followers."†

The phenomenon is thus continuous and, in its essentials, unchanging. From the most primitive times there has been a close association between the belief in divine illumination and spiritual intercourse, and mental states that are unquestionably pathological. Following this there has been a more or less deliberate cultivation of these states in the desire to renew communion with a spiritual world hidden from man's normal senses. In this there need be no deliberate imposture. When imposture does occur, it

* *Saint Teresa*, by H. Joli, pp. 25, 26, and 58.
† *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 1883, p. 68.

would be at a later culture stage. At the beginning there is nothing but misunderstanding. First in order of time comes the crude animistic interpretation of almost every phase of human activity. So far as primitive life is concerned, the evidence of this is simply overwhelming. Next, as Tylor has pointed out, from believing that the occurrence of certain mental states provides the conditions of communication with an unseen world to the deliberate creation of those states is a natural and an easy step. There is thus set on foot a deliberate culture of the supernatural. This cultivation of abnormal states of mind once initiated persists, now in one form, now in another, but is substantially the same throughout. Whether we are dealing with the crude practices of the savage, the less crude, but still obvious methods of solitary living and bodily maceration of the medieval monk, or the morbid and unhealthy dwelling upon a single idea which remains one of the conditions of 'illumination' to-day, we are confronted with the same thing. In every case the object—unconscious, maybe—is the provision of conditions that render hallucination and illusion a practical certainty. In connection with non-religious matters the unhealthiness of mind, distortion of vision, and unreliability of judgment induced by methods akin to those named is now generally recognised. We have yet to see the same thing as generally recognised in connection with religious beliefs. We see in addition that a great many of those experiences, once accepted as clear evidence of supernatural communication, are more properly explainable in terms of nervous derangement. In such cases there is neither celestial illumination nor diabolic communion, neither—to use

Maudsley's phrase—theolepsy nor diabolepsy, only psycholepsy. In the present chapter we have been striving to apply this principle to a little wider field than is usual. We have been studying the misinterpretation, in terms of religion, of abnormal or pathological states of mind, and observing how far these have contributed to building up and perpetuating a conviction of the possibility of supernatural intercourse. We have yet to trace the same principle of misinterpretation in the sexual and social life of mankind.

CHAPTER FOUR
SEX & RELIGION IN PRIMITIVE LIFE

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SEXUAL feeling and religious belief is ancient, intimate, and sustained. It has impressed itself on many observers who have approached the subject from widely different points of view. Some have treated the connection as purely accidental, and as having no more than a mere historical interest. Others have used it as illustrating the way in which so sacred a subject as religion may suffer degradation in degenerate hands. Others of a more scientific temper have dealt with the relations between sexualism and religion as illustrations of a mere perversion. A deal may be said in favour of this last point of view. We know, as a matter of fact, that such cases of perversion do exist, in what form and to what extent will be discussed later. We are also aware that strong feeling which cannot find vent in one direction will secure expression in another. The annals of Roman Catholicism contain accounts of numerous persons who have sought refuge in a monastery or a nunnery as the result of disappointment in love, and it would be foolish to conclude that strong amorous feelings are annihilated because there is a change in the object to which they are directed. Paul was not a different man from the Saul of pre-conversion days, but the same person with his energies directed into a new channel. Protestantism is without the obvious outlets for unsatisfied sexual feeling such as is provided by Roman Catholicism, but it provides other outlets. Religious service as a whole remains, and intense religious devotion may very often owe its origin to sources undreamt of by the devotee.

Between religious beliefs and sexual feelings the connection is, however, wider and deeper, than the relation expressed by mere perversion. Neither is the relation one of mere accident. An examination of the facts in the light of adequate scientific knowledge, combined with a due perception of primitive human psychology and sociology, have shown that the two things are united at their source. One eminent medical writer asserts that "in a certain sense, the history of religion can be regarded as a peculiar mode of manifestation of the human sexual instinct." * Another writer substantially endorses this by the remark that "in a certain sense the religious life is an irradiation of the reproductive instinct." † How easily one glides into the other very little observation of life or study of history will show. The language of devotion and of amatory passion is often identical, and seems to serve equally well for either purpose. The significance of this fact is often obscured by our having etherealised the conception of love, and so losing sight of its physiological basis. And, having hidden it from sight, we, not unnaturally, fail to give it due consideration. This is, in its way, a fatal blunder. The sex life of man and woman is too large a fact and too pervasive a force to be ignored with safety. Ignorance combined with prudery conspires to perpetuate what ignorance alone began; and the sex life, in both its normal and abnormal manifestations, has been perpetually exploited in the interests of supernaturalism.

The evidence that may be adduced in favour of what has been said is vast, and covers a wide range.

* Dr. Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, p. 97.

† E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 401.

Historically it covers such facts as the relations between primitive religious beliefs and the sexual life, and the multiplication of sects of a markedly erotic character during periods of religious enthusiasm. "Even the most casual students of religion," says Professor G. B. Cutten, "must have observed an apparently intimate connection between religious and sexual emotions, and not a few have read with amazement the abnormal cults which have had the sexual element as a foundation for their denominational dissent."* A phenomenon so striking as to force itself on the notice of the most 'casual students' raises the presumption that the relation between the two sets of facts is rather more than that of 'apparent' intimacy. When in the course of history two things appear together over and over again, one is surely justified in assuming that there is some underlying principle responsible for the association. The search for this principle leads to the next class of evidence—the psychological. In this we are concerned with the relation between the sexual feelings and the religious idea, an association not always expressed through the comparatively harmless medium of language. And, finally, we have the evidence derived from pathology, where we are able to discern a perverted sexuality masquerading as religious fervour.

In a previous chapter there has been pointed out the kind of mental environment in which primitive man moves. As one of the earliest forms of systematised thinking, religion dominates all other forms of mental activity. In savage culture there is hardly a single event into which religious considerations do

* *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 419.

not enter. The savage does not merely believe in a supernatural world, he lives in it; it is as real to him as anything around him, and far more potent in its action. Above all, it is important to bear in mind that although one is compelled to speak of the natural and the supernatural when dealing with early beliefs, no such separation is present to the primitive intelligence. The division between the natural and the supernatural in the external world is the reflection of a corresponding division in the world of thought, and this arises only at a subsequent stage. What is afterwards recognised as the supernatural pervades everything. In a sense it is everything, since most of what occurs is by the agency or connivance of animistic forces.

In such a world, where even the ordinary events of life have a supernatural significance, the strange and sometimes terrifying phenomena of sexual life carry peculiarly strong evidences of supernatural activity. Events which are to the modern mind the most obvious consequences of sex life are to the primitive mind proofs of supernatural or ghostly agency. Nothing, for example, would appear less open to misconception than the connection between sexual relations and the birth of children. Yet, on this head, Mr. Sidney Hartland has produced a mass of evidence, gathered from all parts of the world, and leading to the conclusion that in the most primitive stages of human culture, conception and birth are ascribed to direct supernatural influence. Setting out from a study of the world-wide vogue of the belief in supernatural birth—contained in the author's earlier work, *The Legend of Perseus*—Mr. Hartland finds in this a survival of a

culture stage in which all birth is believed to be supernatural. Survivals of this belief that birth is a phenomenon independent of the union of the sexes are found in the existence of numerous semi-magical devices to obtain children, still practised in many parts of Europe, and which were practised on a much more extensive scale during the medieval period; in the ignorance of man concerning physiological functions in general, the existence of Motherright which appears to have universally antedated Fatherright—the origin of which he traces to economic causes, and to the animistic nature of primitive beliefs in general.*

Such a conclusion is not without verification from the beliefs of existing savages. The Bahau of Central Borneo have no notion of the real duration of pregnancy, and date its commencement only from the time of its becoming visible. The Niol-Niol of Dampier Land in North-Western Australia hold birth to be independent of sexual intercourse. It is engendered by a pre-existing spirit through the agency of a medicine man. The North Queenslanders have a similar belief. They believe a child to be sent in answer to the husband's prayer as a punishment to his wife when he is vexed with her. On the Proserpine River the Blacks believe that a child is the gift of a supernatural being called Kunya. In South Queensland the Euahlayi believe that spirits congregate at certain spots and pounce on passing women, and so are born. On the Slave Coast of West Africa the Awunas say that a child derives the lower jaw from the mother; all the rest comes from the spirits. Among these people and others that might be named paternity exists in

* *Primitive Paternity*, 2 vols., 1909–10.

name, but it implies something entirely different to what it afterwards connotes. Mr. Hartland gives numerous instances of this curious fact, and points out that "the attention of mankind would not be early or easily fastened upon the procreative process. It is lengthy, extending over months during which the observer's attention would be inevitably diverted by a variety of objects, most of them of far more pressing import. . . . The sexual passion would be gratified instinctively without any thought of the consequences, and in an overwhelming proportion of cases without the consequence of pregnancy at all. When that consequence occurred it would not be visible for weeks or months after the act which produced it. A hundred other events might have taken place in the interval which would be likely to be credited with the result by one wholly ignorant of natural laws."

There seems, therefore, fair grounds for Mr. Hartland's conclusion that:—

"for generations and æons the truth that a child is only born in consequence of an act of sexual union, that the birth of a child is the natural consequence of such an act performed in favouring circumstances, and that every child must be the result of such an act and of no other cause, was not realised by mankind, that down to the present day it is imperfectly realised by some peoples, and that there are still others among whom it is unknown."

This, however, is but one of the ways in which supernatural beliefs become associated with sexual phenomena. In truth, there is not a stage of any importance in the sexual life of men and women where the same association does not transpire. There is, for example,

the important phenomenon of puberty—important from both a physiological and sociological point of view. Pubic ceremonies of some kind are found all over the world, and in all forms, from those current amongst savages up to the contemporary practice of confirmation in the Christian Church. At all stages the period of puberty is the time of initiation. With uncivilised peoples a very general rule is the separation of the sexes, with fasting. Mr. Stanley Hall in his elaborate work on *Adolescence* has dealt very exhaustively with these customs, with which we shall be more closely concerned when we come to deal with the subject of conversion. At present it is only necessary to point out that the governing idea is that at puberty the boy and the girl are brought into special relationship with the tribal spirits, the proof of which relationship lies in the sexual functions originated.

With boys, once puberty is attained, the sexual development is orderly and unobtrusive. In the case of girls certain recurring phenomena make the essential fact of sex much more impressive to the primitive mind, with far-reaching sociological consequences. "Ignorance of the nature of female periodicity," says A. E. Crawley, "leads man to consider it as the flow of blood from a wound, naturally, or more usually, supernaturally produced."* In Siam an evil spirit is believed to be the cause of the wound. Amongst the Chiriguanas the girl fasts, while women beat the floor with sticks in order to drive away "the snake that has wounded the girl." Similar beliefs are found very generally among people in a low stage of culture, and customs and beliefs still surviving among people more

* *The Mystic Rose*, p. 191.

advanced point to the conclusion that convictions of the same kind were once fairly universal. It is this function, combined with the function of childbirth, that brings woman into close contact with the supernatural world, makes her an object of fear and wonder to primitive man, accounts for a number of the customs and beliefs associated with her, and finally helps to determine her social position. It is because her periodicity is taken as evidence of her communion with spiritual forces that special precautions have to be taken concerning her. She becomes spiritually contagious. Thus, the natives of New Britain, while engaged in making fish-traps, carefully avoid all women. They believe that if a woman were even to touch a fish-trap, it would catch nothing. Amongst the Maoris, if a man touched a menstruous woman, he would be taboo 'an inch thick.' An Australian black fellow, who discovered that his wife had lain on his blanket at her menstrual period, killed her, and died of terror himself within a fortnight. In Uganda the pots which a woman touches while the impurity of childbirth or menstruation is on her, are destroyed. With many North American Indians the use of weapons touched by women during these times would bring misfortune. A menstruating woman is with them the object they dread most. In Tahiti women are secluded. In some cases she is too dangerous to be even touched by others, and food is given her at the end of a stick. With the Pueblo Indians contact with a woman at these times exposes a man to attacks from an evil spirit, and he may pass on the infection to others.*

* See Frazer's *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 145–63, and Crawley's *Mystic Rose*.

It is needless to multiply instances; the same general reason governs all, and this has been clearly expressed by Dr. Frazer:—

"The object of secluding women at menstruation is to neutralise the dangerous influence which is supposed to emanate from them at such times. The general effect of these rules is to keep the women suspended, so to say, between heaven and earth. Whether enveloped in her hammock and slung up to the roof, as in South America, or elevated above the ground in a dark and narrow cage, as in New Zealand, she may be considered to be out of the way of doing mischief, since being shut off both from the earth and from the sun, she can poison neither of these great sources of life by her deadly contagion. The precautions thus taken to isolate and insulate the girl are dictated by regard for her own safety as well as for the safety of others.... In short, the girl is viewed as charged with a powerful force which, if not kept within bounds, may prove the destruction both of the girl herself and all with whom she comes in contact. To repress this force within the limits necessary for the safety of all concerned is the object of the taboos in question."

The savage is far too logical in his methods to allow such an idea to end here. If a woman is so highly charged with spiritual infection as to be dangerous at certain frequently recurring periods, she may be more or less dangerous between these periods. As Havelock Ellis says: "Instead of being regarded as a being who at periodic intervals becomes the victim of a spell of impurity, the conception of impurity becomes amalgamated with the conception of woman; she is, as Tertullian puts it, *Janua diaboli*; and this is the attit-

ude which still persisted in medieval days." * This is to be expected from what one knows of the workings of the primitive intelligence, but it is surprising to find Mr. Ellis continue by saying, on apparently good grounds, that "the belief in the periodically recurring impurity of women has by no means died out to-day. Among a very large section of the women of the middle and lower classes of England and other countries it is firmly believed that the touch of a menstruating woman will contaminate; only a few years since, in the course of a correspondence on this subject in the *British Medical Journal* (1878), even medical men were found to state from personal observation that they had no doubt whatever on this point. Thus, one doctor, who expressed surprise that any doubt could be thrown on the point, wrote, after quoting cases of spoiled hams, etc., presumed to be due to this cause, which had come under his own personal observation: 'For two thousand years the Italians have had this idea of menstruating women. We English hold to it, the Americans have it, also the Australians. Now, I should like to know the country where the evidence of any such observation is unknown.'" Evidently animism is a more persistent frame of mind than most people are inclined to believe.

It is certain, however, that this conception of woman's nature is dominant in the lower stages of culture. She is spiritually dangerous, and the principle of 'taboo' is made to cover a great many of her relations to man. In Tahiti a woman was not allowed to touch the weapons or fishing implements of men. Amongst the Todas women are not permitted to touch the cattle. If

* *Man and Woman*, p. 15.

a wife touches the food of her husband, among the Hindus, the food is unfit to be eaten. An Eskimo wife dare not eat with her husband. In New Zealand wives were not allowed to eat with the males lest their taboo should kill them. Many tribes are careful to refrain from contact with women before going to fight. They believe that this would rob them and their weapons of strength. Other practices followed by savages before going to war forbid one assuming that this abstention is due to any rational fear of dissipating their energies. Instead of conserving their strength they weaken themselves by the many privations they undergo before fighting, in order to ensure victory. Professor Frazer well says:—

"When we observe what pains these misguided savages took to unfit themselves for the business of war by abstaining from food, denying themselves rest, and lacerating their bodies, we shall probably not be disposed to attribute their practice of continence in war to a rational fear of dissipating their bodily energies by indulgence in the lusts of the flesh."*

The conception of woman as one heavily charged with supernatural potentialities, and, therefore, a source of danger to the community, seems to lie at the basis of the widespread belief in the religious 'uncleanness' of women. The real significance of the word 'unclean' in religious ritual has been obscured by our modern use of it in a hygienic or ethical sense. In reality it is but an illustration of the principle of 'taboo,' and 'taboo' may extend to anything, good or bad, useful or useless, hygienically clean or unclean.

* *Taboo*, pp. 163–4.

The primary meaning of 'taboo,' a Polynesian word, is something that is set aside or forbidden. The field covered by this word among savage and semi-savage races is, as Robertson Smith points out, "very wide, for there is no part of life in which the savage does not feel himself surrounded by mysterious agencies and recognise the need of walking warily."* Anything may thus become the object of a 'taboo.' Weapons, food, animals, places, special relations of one person to another at certain times and under certain conditions. It is enough that some special or particular degree of supernatural influence is associated with the object in question. The ancient Jews, for example, in prohibiting the eating of swine's flesh, were as far as possible removed in their thought from any connection with dietetics. They were simply following the well-known savage custom that the totem of a tribe is sacred. The pig was a totem with many of the Semitic tribes, and must not, therefore, be eaten.† It was not an unclean animal, in the modern sense, it was a 'holy' animal. With the Syrians the dove was so holy that even to touch it made a man 'unclean' for a whole day. No North American Indian will eat of the flesh of an animal that is a tribal totem, except under grave necessity, and even then with elaborate religious ceremonies. So, "a prohibition to eat the flesh of an animal of a certain species, that has its ground not in natural loathing but in religious horror and reverence, implies that something divine is ascribed to every animal of the

* *Religion of the Semites*, p. 142.

† A long list of animals that were sacred to various Semitic tribes has been compiled by Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, pp. 194–201.

species. And what seems to us to be a natural loathing often turns out, in the case of primitive peoples, to be based on a religious *taboo*, and to have its origin not in feelings of contemptuous disgust, but of reverential dread."*

The real significance of 'unclean' in connection with religious ritual is 'holy,' something that partakes in a special manner of supernatural influence and therefore involves a certain danger in contact. As the writer just cited observes:—

"The acts that cause uncleanness are exactly the same which among savage nations place a man under taboo.... These acts are often involuntary, and often innocent, or even necessary to society. The savage, accordingly, imposes a taboo on a woman in childbed, or during her courses... simply because birth and everything connected with the propagation of the species on the one, and disease and death on the other hand, seem to involve the action of supernatural agencies of a dangerous kind. If he attempts to explain, he does so by supposing that on these occasions spirits of deadly power are present; at all events the persons involved seem to him to be sources of mysterious danger, which has all the characters of an infection, and may extend to other people unless due precautions are observed.... It has nothing to do with respect for the gods, but springs from mere terror of the supernatural influences associated with the woman's physical condition." †

* Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, pp. 306–7. † *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 427–9. For a fuller discussion of the subject, see *Studies on the Psychology of Sex*, by Havelock Ellis, 1901.

It is interesting to observe the manner in which this notion of the sacramentally 'unclean' nature of woman has affected her religious status, and by inference, her social status likewise. Among the Australians women are shut out from any part in the religious ceremonies. In the Sandwich Isles a woman's touch made a sacrifice unclean. If a Hindu woman touches a sacred image the divinity is destroyed. In Fiji women are excluded from the temples. The Papuans have the same custom. The Ainus of Japan allow a woman to prepare the sacrifice, but not to offer it. Women are excluded from many Mohammedan mosques. Among the Jews women have no part in the religious ceremonies. In the Christian Church women were excluded from the priestly office. A Council held at Auxerre at the end of the sixth century forbade women touching the Eucharist with their bare hands, and in various churches they were forbidden to approach the altar during Mass.* In the gospels Jesus forbids the woman to touch Him, after the resurrection, although Thomas was allowed to feel His wounds. "The Church of the Middle Ages did not hesitate to provide itself with eunuchs in order to supply cathedral choirs with the soprano tones inhering by nature in women alone." † The 'Churching' of women still in vogue has its origin in the same superstition that childbirth endows woman with a supernatural influence which must be removed in the interests of others. This ceremony was formerly called "The Order of the Purification of Women," and was read at the church door before the woman entered the

* Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, p. 666. † Westermarck, p. 666.

building. Its connection with the ideas indicated above is obvious. The Tahitian practice of excluding women from intercourse with others for two or three weeks after childbirth, with similar practices amongst uncivilised peoples all over the world, led with various modifications up to the current practice of churching. They show that in the opinion of primitive peoples "a woman at and after childbirth is pervaded by a certain dangerous influence which can infect anything and anybody she touches; so that in the interests of the community it becomes necessary to seclude her from society for a while, until the virulence of the infection has passed away, when, after submitting to certain rites of purification, she is again free to mingle with her fellows."* The gradual change of this ceremony, from a getting rid of a dangerous supernatural infection to returning thanks for a natural danger passed, is on all fours with what takes place in other directions in relation to religious ideas and practices.

The important part played by this conception of woman's nature may be traced in the fierce invective directed against her in the early Christian writings. Of course, by that time society had reached a stage when the primitive form of this belief had been outgrown, but ideas and attitudes of mind persist long after their originating conditions have disappeared. In this particular case we have the primitive idea expressed in a form suitable to altered circumstances, and the primitive feeling seeking new warranty in ethical or social considerations. But in the main the old notion is there. Woman is a creature threatening danger

* Frazer, *Taboo*, p. 150.

to man's spiritual welfare.* In this connection we may note an observation of Westermarck's during his residence among the country people of Morocco. He was struck, he says, with the superstitious fear the men had of women. They are supposed to be much better versed in magic, and therefore one ran greater danger in offending them. The curses of women are, generally, much more feared than those of men. To this we have a parallel in Christianity which so often revived and strengthened the lower religious beliefs. During the witch mania an overwhelming proportion of those charged with and executed for sorcery were women. As a matter of fact, women were more prone than men to credit themselves with possessing supernatural power. But the theological explanation was that the devil had more power over women than men. This was, obviously, a heritage from the primitive belief above described.†

Another way in which religion becomes closely associated with sexualism is through the widely diffused phallic worship. The worship of the generative power in the form of stones, pillars, and carved representations of the male and female sexual organs plays an unquestionably important part in the history of religion, however hardly pressed it may have been by some enthusiastic theorisers. "The farther back we go," says Mr. Hargrave Jennings, "in the history of every country, the deeper we explore into all religions,

* See the Rev. Principal Donaldson's *Woman: her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and among the Early Christians*, bk. iii. † For the general influence of these beliefs about woman in determining her social position, see note at the end of this chapter.

ancient as well as modern, we stumble the more frequently upon the incessantly intensifying distinct traces of this supposedly indecent mystic worship."* On the lower Congo, says Sir H. H. Johnston:—

"Phallic worship in various forms prevails. It is not associated with any rites that might be called particularly obscene; and on the coast, where manners and morals are particularly corrupt, the phallus cult is no longer met with. In the forests between Manyanga and Stanley Pool it is not rare to come upon a little rustic temple, made of palm fronds and poles, within which male and female figures, nearly or quite life size, may be seen, with disproportionate genital organs, the figures being intended to represent the male and female principle. Around these carved and painted statues are many offerings, plates, knives, and cloth, and frequently also the phallic symbol may be seen dangling from the rafters. There is not the slightest suspicion of obscenity in all this, and anyone qualifying this worship of the generative power as obscene does so hastily and ignorantly. It is a solemn mystery to the Congo native, a force but dimly understood, and, like all mysterious natural manifestations, it is a power that must be propitiated and persuaded to his good."†

The Egyptian religion was permeated with phallicism. In India phallic worship is widely scattered. In Benares, the sacred city, "everywhere, in the temples, in the little shrines in the street, the emblem of the Creator is phallic." Symbols of the male and female sexual organs, the Lingam and the Yoni, have been ob-

* *The Worship of Priapus*, Pref. p. 9.

† *The River Congo*, p. 405.

jects of worship in India from the earliest times. With the Sakti ceremonies, Hindu religion dispenses with symbols, and devotion is paid to a naked woman selected for the occasion.* This worship of a nude female is a very familiar phenomenon in the history of religion. Some of the early Christian sects were said to have practised it, and it is a feature of some Russian religious sects to-day. The subject will be dealt with more fully hereafter.

In ancient Rome, in the month of April, "when the fertilising powers of nature begin to operate, and its powers to be visibly developed, a festival in honour of Venus took place; in it the phallus was carried in a cart, and led in procession by the Roman ladies to the temple of Venus outside the Colline gate, and then presented by them to the sexual part of the goddess."† In the Greek Bacchic religious processions huge phalli were carried in a chariot drawn by bulls, and surrounded by women and girls singing songs of praise. Phallic worship was also associated with the cults of Dionysos and Eleusis. It is met with among the ancient Mexicans and Peruvians, and also among the North American tribes. The famous Black Stone of Mecca, to which religious honours are paid, is also said by authorities to be a phallic symbol. The stone set up by Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 18–9) falls into the same category. References to phallic worship may be found in many parts of the Bible, and authoritative writers like Mr. Hargrave Jennings and Major-General Forlong have not hesitated to assert that the god of the

*A description of the Sakti ceremony is given by Major-General Forlong, *Faiths of Man*, iii. pp. 228–9. † Westropp, *Primitive Symbolism*, p. 30.

Jewish Ark was a sexual symbol. Seeing the extent to which phallic worship exists in other religions, it would be surprising did this not also exist in the early Jewish religion.

In Christendom we have evidence of the perpetuation of the phallic cult in the decree of Mans, 1247, and of the Synod of Tours, 1396, against its practice. Quite unsuccessfully, however. Indeed, the architecture of medieval churches bear in their ornamentation numerous evidences of the failure at suppression. Of course, much of this ornamentation may have been due to mere imitation, but often enough it was deliberate. "The scholar," says Bonwick, "who gazed to-day at the roof of Temple Church, London, had the illustration before him. A symbol there, repeatedly displayed, is the popular Hindu one to express sex worship."* The belief found expression in other ways than ornamentation. When Sir William Hamilton visited Naples in 1781 he found in Isernia a Christian custom in vogue which he described in a letter to Sir William Banks, and which admitted of no doubt as to its Priapic character. Every September was celebrated a festival in the Church of SS. Cosmus and Damianus. During the progress of the festival vendors paraded the streets offering small waxen phalli, which were bought by the devout and placed in the church, much as candles are still purchased and given. At the same time, prayers are offered to St. Como by those who desire children. In Midlothian, in 1268, the clergy instructed their flock to sprinkle water with a dog's phallus in order to avert a murrain. The same practice existed in Inverkeithing, and in Easter week

* *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, p. 256.

priest and people danced round a wooden phallus.* Mr. Westropp, quoting an eighteenth-century writer,† says: "When the Huguenots took Embrun, they found among the relics of the principal church a Priapus, of three pieces in the ancient fashion, the top of which was worn away from being constantly washed with wine." The temple of St. Eutropius, destroyed by the Huguenots, is said to have contained a similar figure. From Mr. Sidney Hartland's collection of practices for obtaining children I take the following:—

"At Bourg-Dieu, in the diocese of Bourges, a similar saint" (similar to the priapean figure previously described) "was called Guerlichon or Greluchon. There after nine days' devotions women stretched themselves on the horizontal figure of the saint, and then scraped the phallus for mixture in water as a drink. Other saints were worshipped elsewhere in France with equivalent rites. Down to the Revolution there stood at Brest a chapel of Saint Guignolet containing a priapean statue of the holy man. Women who were, or feared to be, sterile used to go and scrape a little of the prominent member, which they put into a glass of water from the well and drank. The same practice was followed at the Chapel of Saint Pierre-á-Croquettes in Brabant until 1837, when the archæologist Schayes called attention to it, and thereupon the ecclesiastical authorities removed the cause of scandal. Women have, however, still continued to make votive offerings of pins down almost, if not quite, to the present day. At Antwerp stood at the gateway to the Church of Saint Walburga in the Rue des Pêcheurs a

* Forlong, *Faiths of Man*, iii. p. 66. † *Primitive Symbolism*, p. 36.

statue, the sexual organ of which had been entirely scraped away by women for the same purpose."*

From what has been said, it will not be difficult to understand the existence of the custom of religious prostitution. Considering the sexual impulse as specially connected with a supernatural force, man pays it religious honour, and comes to identify its manifestations as an expression of the supernatural and also as an act of worship towards it. In India the practice existed, when most temples had their 'bayadères.' In ancient Chaldea every woman was compelled to prostitute herself once in her life in the temple of the goddess Mylitta—the Chaldean Venus. This custom existed elsewhere, and by it the woman was compelled to remain within the temple enclosures until some man chose her, from whom she received a piece of money. The money, of course, belonged to the temple.† In Greece, Carthage, Syria, etc., we find the same custom. Among the Jews, so orthodox a commentary as Smith's *Bible Dictionary* admits that the 'Kadechim' attached to the temple were prostitutes. The frequent references to the service of the 'groves' surrounding the temple irresistibly suggest their likeness to the groves around the temples of Mylitta, and their use for the same purpose.

* *Primitive Paternity*, i. pp. 63–4.

† Major-General Forlong agrees with many other authorities in tracing our custom of kissing under the mistletoe to this ancient practice. "The mistletoe," he says, "marks in one sense Venus's temple, for any girl may be kissed if caught under its sprays—a practice, though modified, which recalls to us that horrid one mentioned by Herodotus, where all women were for once at least the property of the man who sought them in Mylitta's temple."—*Rivers of Life*, i. p. 91.

There is no necessity to prolong the subject,* nor is it necessary to my purpose to discuss the origin of phallic worship. It is enough to have shown the manner in which, from the very earliest times, religious belief and sexual phenomena have been connected in the closest possible manner. In this respect it is only on all fours with the relation of religion to phenomena in general, but here the attitude of mind is accentuated and prolonged by the startling facts of sexual development. The connection becomes consequently so close it is not surprising to find that the association has persisted down to the present time, and moods that have their origin in the sexual life are frequently attributed to religious influences. The primitive intelligence, frankly seeing in the phenomena of sex a manifestation of the supernatural, sees here a continuous endorsement of religious life. The more sophisticated mind raised above this point of view continues, with modifications, the primitive practices, and in ignorance of the physiological causes of its own states is only too ready to interpret ebullitions of sex feeling as evidence of the divine.

NOTE TO PAGE 104.

It is strange that so little attention has been paid to these primitive beliefs as important factors in determining the social position of women. It is too generally assumed that because woman is physically weaker than man it is her weakness that

*Those who desire further and more detailed information may consult Forlong's great work, *The Rivers of Life*, Payne Knight's *Worship of Priapus*, Westropp and Wake's *Phallicism in Ancient Religion*, Brown's *Dionysiak Myth*, Westropp's *Primitive Symbolism*, R. A. Campbell's *Phallic Worship*, Hargrave Jennings's *Worship of Priapus*, etc.

has determined her subordination. Both the advocates and the opponents of 'Woman's Rights' appear to have reached a common agreement on this point. During some of the debates in the House of Commons, for example, it was openly stated by prominent politicians, as an axiom of political philosophy, that all laws rest upon a basis of force, and if men say they will not obey woman-made laws there is no power that can compel them to do so. On the other side, women, while appealing to what they properly call higher considerations, themselves dwell upon the physical weakness of woman as the reason for her subordination in the past. Both parties are helped in their arguments by the facile division of social history into two periods, an earlier one in which club law plays the chief part, and a later period when mental and moral qualities assume a dominating position. The consequence is, runs the argument, that each sex has to battle with the dead weight of tradition and custom. The woman is oppressed by the tradition of subordination to the male; the man is inspired by that of dominance over the female.

It is when we ask for evidence of this that we see how flimsy the case is. Social phenomena in either civilised or uncivilised society furnishes no proof that institutions and customs rest upon a basis of physical force. The rulership of a tribe often rests with the old men of a tribe; with some tribes the women are consulted, and invariably custom and tradition plays a powerful part. The notion that the primitive chief is the primitive strong man of the tribe is as baseless as the belief in an original social contract, and owes its existence to the same kind of fanciful speculation. As Frazer says, "it is one of those facile theories which the arm-chair philosopher concocts with his feet on the fender without taking the trouble to consult the facts." The primitive chief may be a strong man. The tribal council or chief may use force or rely upon physical force to enforce certain decrees, just as the modern king or parliament may call on the help of policeman or soldier, but this no more proves that their rule is based upon force than Mr. Asquith's premiership proves his physical superiority to the rest of the Cabinet.

All political life, and to a smaller degree all social life, involves the direction of force, but neither appeal

to force for an ultimate justification, nor do social institutions originate in an act of force. It is one of the commonplaces of historical study that when an institution is actually forced upon a people it very quickly becomes inoperative. Other things equal, one group of people may overcome another group because of physical superiority, but the conquest over, the question as to which group shall really rule, or which set of institutions shall survive, is settled on quite different grounds. The history of almost any country will give examples of the absorption of the conqueror by the conquered, and the bringing of imported institutions into line with native life and feeling. Fundamentally the relations binding people together into a society are not physical, but psychological. Society rests upon the foundations of a common mental life—upon sympathy, beliefs, the desire for companionship, etc. As Professor J. M. Baldwin puts it, the fundamental social facts are not *things*, but *thoughts*.* As a member of a social group man is born into an environment that is essentially psychological, and his attitude not only towards his fellow human beings, but towards nature in general, is determined by the psychological contents of the society to which he belongs.

Now if the relation of one man to another is not determined by physical superiority and inferiority, if the relations of classes within a society are not determined in this manner, why should it be assumed that as a sex woman's position is fixed by this means? It seems more reasonable to assume that some other principle

*A good discussion of the topic will be found in this author's *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development.*

than that of club law, a principle set in operation very early in the history of civilisation, fixed the main lines upon which the relations of the sexes were to develop, however much other forces helped its operation. I believe this desired factor is to be found in the superstitious notions savages develop concerning the nature and function of woman, and which society only very slowly outgrows. For, as Frazer says: "The continuity of human development has been such that most, if not all, of the great institutions which still form the framework of a civilised society have their roots in savagery, and have been handed down to us in these later days through countless generations, assuming new outward forms in the process of transmission, but remaining in their inmost core substantially unchanged."

In considering the play of primitive ideas as determining the lines of human evolution several things must be kept clearly in mind. One is that the course of biological development has made woman, as a sex, dependent upon man, as a sex, for protection and support. This is true quite apart from economic considerations or from those arising from the relative physical strength of the sexes. The prime function of woman, biologically, is that of motherhood. She is, so to speak, mother in a much more important and more pervasive sense than man is father. In the case of woman, her functions are of necessity subordinated to this one. With man this is not the case. It is with the woman that the nutrition of the child rests before birth, and a large portion of her strength is expended in the discharge of this function. The same is true for some period immediately after birth. Again to use a

biological illustration, during the period of child-bearing and child-rearing the relation of the man to the woman may be likened to that which exists between the germ cells and the somatic cells. As the latter is the medium of protection and the conveyer of nutrition in relation to the former, so it falls to the male to protect and in some degree to provide for the woman as child-bearer. It would not, of course, be impossible for woman to provide for herself, but it would detract so considerably from social efficiency that any group in which it was done would soon disappear. It is the nature and supreme function of woman that makes her dependent upon man. And even though the dreams of some were realised, and society as a whole cared for woman in the discharge of this function, the issue would not be changed. It would mean that instead of a woman being dependent upon one man she would be dependent upon all men. Nor is the substantial facts of the situation changed by anyone pointing out that all women do not and cannot under ordinary circumstances become wives and mothers. Human nature will always develop on the lines of the normal functions of men and women, and there can be no question in this case as to what these are.

I have used the word 'dependence,' but this does not, of necessity, involve either subordination or subjection. It may provide the condition of either or of both, but the dependence of the woman on the man is, as I have said, biologically inescapable. Her subjection is quite another question. Dependence may be mutual. One class of society may be dependent upon another class, but the two may move on a perfect level of equality. And with uncivilised peoples

the evidence goes to prove that, while the spheres of the sexes are more clearly differentiated than with us, this difference is seldom if ever expressed in terms of superior and inferior. Savages would say, as civilised people still say, there are many things that it is wrong for a woman to do, and they would add there are also things that a man must not do. They would be as shocked at woman doing certain things as some people among ourselves were when women first began to speak at public meetings. Their disapproval would not rest on the ground that these things were 'unwomanly,' nor upon any question of weakness or strength, of inferiority or superiority, but for another and, to the savage, very urgent reason.

One can very easily exaggerate the extent of the subjection of women among uncivilised people. As a matter of fact, it usually is exaggerated. Not all travellers are capable of accurate observation, and very many are led astray by what are really superficial aspects of savage life. They are so impressed by the contemplation of a state of affairs different from our own that they mistake mere lines of demarcation for a moral valuation. Many travellers, for example, observing that women are strictly forbidden to do this or that, conclude that the woman has no rights as against the man. As in nearly all these cases the man is as strictly forbidden to encroach on the woman's sphere, one might as reasonably reverse the statement and dwell upon male subjection. As a matter of fact, both furnish examples of the all-powerful principle of 'taboo.' Some things are taboo to the man, others to the woman. And the key to the problem lies in the nature and origin of these taboos. But taboo does not

extinguish rights; it confirms them. Under its operation, far from its being the truth that women are without status or rights or power, her position and rights are clearly marked, generally recognised, and quickly enforced. Some examples of this may be noted.

A Kaffir woman when ill-treated possesses the right of asylum with her parents, and remains there until the husband makes atonement. The same thing holds of the West African Fulahs. In the Marquesas a woman is prohibited the use of canoes; on the other hand, men are prohibited frequenting certain places belonging to the women. In Nicaragua no man may enter the woman's market-place under penalty of a beating. With most of the North-American tribes a woman has supreme power inside the lodge. The husband possesses no power of interference. In most cases the husband cannot give away anything belonging to the lodge without first getting the consent of his wife. With the Nootkas, women are consulted on all matters of business. Livingstone relates his surprise on finding that a native would not accompany him on a journey because he could not get his wife's consent. He found this to be one of the customs of the tribe to which the man belonged. Among the Kandhs of India nothing public is done without consulting the women. In the Pellew Islands the head of the family can do nothing of importance without consulting the oldest female relative. Among the Hottentots women have supreme rule in the house. If a man oversteps the line, his female relatives inflict a fine, which is paid to the wife. With the Bechuanas the mother of the chief is present at all councils, and he can hardly decide anything without her consent. These are only a

few of the cases that might be cited, but they are sufficient to show that the common view of women among savages as without recognised status, or power, needs very serious qualification. Of course, ill-treatment of women does occur with uncivilised as with civilised people, and she may suffer from the expression of brutal passion or superior strength, but an examination of the facts justifies Starcke's opinion that "we are not justified in assuming that the savage feels a contempt for women in virtue of her sex."

In primitive life, in short, the dominant idea is not that of superiority in relation to woman, but that of difference. She is different from man, and this difference involves consequences of the gravest character, and against which due precautions must be taken. Superiority and inferiority are much later conceptions; they belong to a comparatively civilised period, and their development offers an admirable example of the way in which customs based on sheer superstitions become transformed into a social prejudice, with the consequent creation of numerous excuses for their perpetuation. What that initial prejudice is —a prejudice so powerful that it largely determines the future status of woman—has already been pointed out. Her place in society is marked out in uncivilised times by the powerful superstitions connected with sexual functions. Not that she is weaker—although that is, of course, plain—nor that she is inferior, a thought which scarcely exists with uncivilised peoples, but that she is dangerous, particularly so during her functional crises and in childbirth. And being dangerous, because charged with a supernatural influence inimical to others, she is excluded from

certain occupations, and contact with her has to be carefully regulated. I agree with Mr. Andrew Lang that in the regulations concerning women amongst uncivilised people we have another illustration of the far-reaching principle of taboo (*Social Origins and Primal Law*, p. 239) she suffers because of her sex, and because of the superstitious dread to which her sex nature gives birth.

Of course, at a later stage other considerations begin to operate. Where, for example, as amongst the Kaffirs, women are not permitted to touch cattle because of this assumed spiritual infection, and where a man's wealth is measured by the cattle he possesses, it is easy to see that this would constitute a force preventing the political and social equality of the sexes. The pursuits from which women were primarily excluded for purely religious reasons would in course of time come to be looked upon as man's inalienable possessions. And here her physical weakness would play its part; for she could not take, as man could withhold, by force. Even when the primitive point of view is discarded, the social prejudices engendered by it long remains. And social prejudices, as we all know, are the hardest of all things to destroy.

A final consideration needs to be stated. This is that the customs determined by the views of woman (above outlined) fall into line, in a rough-and-ready fashion, with the biological tendency to consecrate the female to the function of motherhood and conserve her energies to that end, leaving other kinds of work to the male. It would be an obvious advantage to a tribe in which woman, relieved from the necessity of physical struggle for food and defence, was

able to attend to children and the more peaceful side of family life. Children would not only benefit thereby, but the home with all its civilising, humanising influences would develop more rapidly. Assuming variations in tribal life in this direction, there is no question as to which tribe that would stand the better chance of survival. The development of life has proceeded here as elsewhere by differentiation and specialisation; and while the tasks demanding the more sustained physical exertions were left to man, and to the performance of which his sexual nature offered no impediment, woman became more and more specialised for maternity and domestic occupations. This, I hasten to add, is not at all intended as a plea for denying to women the right to participate in the wider social life of the species. I am trying to explain a social phase, and neither justifying nor condemning its perpetuation.

CHAPTER FIVE THE INFLUENCE OF SEXUAL AND PATHOLOGIC STATES ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER WE HAVE been concerned with the various ways in which the phenomena attendant on the sexual life of man and woman become associated with religious beliefs. As a force that arises in the life of each individual, and intrudes, as it were, into consciousness, the phenomena of sex fill primitive man with an amazement that is not unmixed with terror. In strict accord with primitive psychology sexual phenomena are conceived as more or less connected with the supernatural world, and becoming thus entwined with religious convictions are made the nucleus of a number of superstitious ceremonies. The connection is close and obvious so long as we restrict our survey to uncivilised humanity. The only room for doubt or discussion is the exact meaning of certain ceremonies, or the order of certain phases of development. It is when we take man in a more advanced stage that obscurity gathers and difficulties arise. The sexual life is no longer lived, as it were, openly. Symbolism and mysticism develop; a more complex social life provides disguised outlets for primitive and indestructible feelings. Sexualism, instead of being something to be glorified, and, so to speak, annotated by religious ceremonies, becomes something to be hidden or decried. Ignored it may be. Decried it may be; but it will not be denied. That is a practical impossibility in the case of so powerful and so pervasive a fact as sex. We may disguise its expression, but only too often the disguise is the equivalent of undesirable and unhealthy manifestations.

The modern history of religion offers a melancholy illustration of the truth of the last sentence, and it is quite clearly exhibited in the history of Christianity itself. From the beginning it strove to suppress the power of sexual feeling. It was an enemy against whom one had to be always on guard, one that had to be crushed, or at least kept in subjection in the interests of spiritual development. And yet the very intensity of the efforts at suppression defeated the object aimed at. With some of the leaders of early Christianity sex became an obsession. Long dwelling upon its power made them unduly and unhealthily conscious of its presence. Instead of sex taking its place as one of the facts of life, which like most other facts might be good or bad as circumstances determined, it was so much dwelt upon as to often dwarf everything else. Asceticism is, after all, mainly a reversed sensualism, or at least confesses the existence of a sensualism that must not be allowed expression lest its manifestation becomes overpowering. Mortification confesses the supremacy of sense as surely as gratification. Moreover, mortification of sense as preached by the great ascetics does not prevent that most dangerous of all forms of gratification, the sensualism of the imagination. That remains, and is apt to gain in strength since the fundamentally healthful energies are denied legitimate and natural modes of expression. Thus it is that we find developing social life not always providing a healthy outlet for the sexual life, and thus it is that the intense striving of religious leaders against the power of the sexual impulse has often forced it into strange and harmful forms of expression. So we find throughout the

history of religion, not only that a deal of what has passed for supernatural illumination to have undoubtedly had its origin in perverted sexual feeling, but the constant emergence of curious religio-erotic sects whose strange mingling of eroticism and religion has scandalised many, and offered a lesson to all had they but possessed the wit to discern it.

Although there is an understandable disinclination, amounting with some to positive revulsion, to recognise the sexual origin of much that passes for religious fervour, the fact is well known to competent medical observers, as the following citations will show. More than a generation since a well-known medical authority said:—

"I know of no fact in pathology more striking and more terrifying than the way in which the phenomena of the ecstatic—which have often been seized upon by sentimental theorisers as proofs of spiritual exaltation—may be plainly seen to bridge the gulf between the innocent foolery of ordinary hypnotic patients and the degraded and repulsive phenomena of nymphomania and satyriasis."*

Dr. C. Norman also observes:—

"Ecstasy, as we see in cases of acute mental disease, is probably always connected with sexual excitement, if not with sexual depravity. The same association is seen in less extreme cases, and one of the commonest features in the conversation of acutely maniacal women is the intermingling of erotic and religious ideas."†

* Article in *The Lancet*, Jan. 11, 1873.

† Article in Tuke's *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine.*

This opinion is fully endorsed by Sir Francis Galton:—

"It has been noticed that among the morbid organic conditions which accompany the show of excessive piety and religious rapture in the insane, none are so frequent as disorders of the sexual organisation. Conversely, the frenzies of religious revivals have not infrequently ended in gross profligacy. The encouragement of celibacy by the fervent leaders of most creeds, utilises in an unconscious way the morbid connection between an over-restraint of the sexual desires and impulses towards extreme devotion."*

Dr. Auguste Forel, the eminent German specialist, points out that—

"When we study the religious sentiment profoundly, especially in the Christian religion, and Catholicism in particular, we find at each step its astonishing connection with eroticism. We find it in the exalted adoration of holy women, such as Mary Magdalene, Marie de Bethany, for Jesus, in the holy legends, in the worship of the Virgin Mary in the Middle Ages, and especially in art. The ecstatic Madonnas in our art galleries cast their fervent regards on Jesus or on the heavens. The expression in Murillo's 'Immaculate Conception' may be interpreted by the highest voluptuous exaltation of love as well as by holy transfiguration. The 'saints' of Correggio regard the Virgin with an amorous ardour which may be celestial, but appears in reality extremely terrestrial and human."†

Another German authority remarks:—

"I venture to express my conviction that we

* *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, pp. 66–7.

† *The Sexual Problem*, pp. 354–5.

should rarely err if, in a case of religious melancholy, we assumed the sexual apparatus to be implicated."*

Dr. Bevan Lewis points out how frequently religious exaltation occurs with women at puberty, and religious melancholia at the period of sexual decline. And Dr. Charles Mercier puts the interchangeability of sexual and religious feelings in the following passage:—

"Religious observances provide an alternative, into which the amatory instinct can be easily and naturally diverted. The emotions and instinctive desires, which finds expression in courtship, is a vast body of vague feeling, which is at first undirected. . . . It is a voluminous state of exaltation that demands enthusiastic action. This is the state antecedent to falling in love, and if an object presents himself or herself, the torrent of emotion is directed into amatory passion. But if no object appears, or if the selected object is denied, then religious observances yield a very passable substitute for the expression of the emotion. Religious observances provide the sensuous atmosphere, the call for self-renunciation, the means of expressing powerful and voluminous feeling, that the potential or disappointed lover needs. The madrigal is transformed into the hymn; the adornment of the person that should have gone to allure the beloved now takes the shape of ecclesiastical vestments; the reverence that should have been paid to the loved one is transformed to a higher object; the enthusiasm that would have expanded in courtship is expressed in worship; the gifts that would have been made, the services that

* Cited by Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, pp. 233–4.

would have been rendered to the loved one, are transferred to the Church."*

Dr. Kraft-Ebing, after dwelling upon the substantial identity of sexual love and religious emotion, summarises his conclusions by saying:—

"Religious and sexual hyperæsthesia at the acme of development show the same volume of intensity and the same quality of excitement, and may, therefore, under given circumstances interchange. Both will in certain pathologic states degenerate into cruelty."†

Even so orthodox a writer as the Rev. S. Baring-Gould points out that—

"The existence of that evil, which, knowing the constitution of man, we should expect to find prevalent in mysticism, the experience of all ages has shown following, dogging its steps inevitably. So slight is the film that separates religion from sensual passion, that uncontrolled spiritual fervour roars readily into a blaze of licentiousness."‡

No useful purpose would be served by lengthening this list of citations. Enough has been said to show that the point of view expressed is one endorsed by many sober, competent, and responsible observers. There exists among them a general, and one may add a growing, recognition of the important truth that the connection between religious and sexual feeling is of the closest character, and that one is very often mistaken for the other. Asceticism, usually taken as evidence to the reverse, is on the contrary, confirmative. The ascetic often presents us with a flagrant case of eroto-mania, expressing itself in terms of religion.

* *Conduct and its Disorders*, pp. 368–9. † *Psychopathia-Sexualis*, pp. 9–11. ‡ *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, Preface.

It is highly significant that the biographies of Christian saints should furnish so many cases of men and women of strong sensual passions, and whose ascetic devotion was only the reaction from almost unbridled sensualism. No wonder that in the temptations experienced by the monks the figures of nude women so often appeared before their heated imaginations. Sexual feeling suppressed in one direction broke out in another. Feelings, in themselves perfectly normal, became, as a consequence of repression and misdirection, pathologic. And one consequence of this was that many of the early Christian writers brought to the consideration of the subject of sex a concentration of mind that resulted in disquisitions of such a nature that it is impossible to do more than refer to them. The sexual relation instead of being refined was coarsened. Marriage was viewed in its lowest form, more as a concession to the weakness of the flesh than as a desirable state for all men and women. Nor can it be said, after many centuries, that these ideas are quite eradicated from present-day life.

A field of investigation that yields much illuminating information is the biographies of the saints and of other religious characters. In many of these cases the acceptance of sexual feeling for religious illumination is very clear. Thus of St. Gertrude, a Benedictine nun of the thirteenth century, we read:—

"One day at chapel she heard supernaturally sung the words, '*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.*' The Son of God, leaning towards her like a sweet lover, and giving to her soul the softest kiss, said to her at the second *Sanctus*, 'In the *Sanctus* addressed to My person, receive with this all the sanctity of My divinity and of

My humanity.' . . . And the following Sunday, while she was thanking God for this favour, behold the Son of God, more beauteous than thousands of angels, takes her to His arms as if He were proud of her, and presents her to God the Father, and in that perfection of sanctity with which He had endowed her."*

Of Juliana of Norwich, who was granted a revelation in 1373, we are told that she had for long 'ardently desired' a bodily sight of the Lord upon the cross; and that finally Jesus appeared to her and said, "I love thee and thou lovest Me, and our love shall never be disparted in two."† So, again, in the case of Sister Jeanne des Anges, Superior of the Convent of Ursulines of Loudon, and the principal character in the famous Grandier witchcraft case, we have a detailed account, in her own words, of the lascivious dreams, unclean suggestions, etc.—all attributed to Satan—and alternating with impressions of bodily union with Jesus.‡ Marie de L'Incarnation addresses Jesus as follows:—

"Oh, my love, when shall I embrace you? Have you no pity on the torments that I suffer? Alas! alas! My love! My beauty! My life! Instead of healing my pain, you take pleasure in it. Come, let me embrace you, and die in your sacred arms."§

Veronica Juliani, beatified by Pope Pius II., took a real lamb to bed with her, kissed it, and suckled it at her breasts. St. Catherine of Genoa threw herself on the ground to cool herself, crying out, "Love, love, I

* Cited by James, *Varieties*, pp. 345–6. † Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 201–9. ‡ See Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, pp. 240–2. § Parkman's *Jesuits of America*, p. 175.

can bear it no longer." She also confessed to a peculiar longing towards her confessor.*

The blessed Mary Alacocque, foundress of the Sacred Heart, was subject from early life to a number of complaints—rheumatism, palsy, pains in the side, ulceration of the legs—and experienced visions early in her career. As a child she had so vivid a sense of modesty that the mere sight of a man offended her. At seventeen she took to wearing a knotted cord drawn so tightly that she could neither eat nor breathe without pain. She compressed her arms so tightly with iron chains that she could not remove them without anguish. "I made," she says, "a bed of potsherds, on which I slept with extreme pleasure." She fasted and tortured herself in a variety of ways, and the more her physical disorders increased the more numerous became her visions. Before she was eighteen years of age, in 1671, she entered a nunnery. From the time she donned the habit of a novice she was 'blessed' with visions. "Our Lord showed me that that day was the day of our spiritual wedding; He forthwith gave me to understand that He wished to make me taste all the sweetness of the caresses of His love. In reality, those divine caresses were from that moment so excessive, that they often put me out of myself." "Once," says one of her biographers, "having retired into her chamber, she threw off the clothes with which she had bedecked herself during the day, when the Son of God showed Himself to her in the state in which He was after His cruel flagellation—that is, with His body all wounded, torn, gory—and He said to her that it was her vanities that had brought Him into that condi-

* Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia-Sexualis*, p. 8.

tion." In one of these visions Jesus took the head of Mary, pressed it to His bosom, spoke to her in passionate words, opened her side and took out her heart, plunged it into His own, and then replaced it. He then explained His design of founding the Order of the Sacred Heart. Ever after, Mary was conscious of a pain in her side and a burning sensation in her chest—two plain symptoms of hysteria.*

Santa Teresa, who died at the early age of thirty-three, and in whose family more than one case of well-developed neurasthenia can be traced, was favoured with 'messages' at a very early age. She believed some of these were temptations from the devil suggesting an 'honourable alliance.' A nervous breakdown followed directly after entrance into a convent. She was then twenty years of age, was subject to fainting fits and longed for illness as a sign of divine favour. She was subject to convulsions, and soon after taking the veil fell into a cataleptic trance, which lasted three days. She was thought to be dead, but at the end of the time sat up and told those around that she had visited both heaven and hell, and seen the joys of the blessed and the torments of the damned. It is at least suggestive that, in spite of the longing for personal communion with Jesus, her first experience of the ecstasy of divine love was experienced after discovering a 'very realistic' picture of a martyred saint—St. Joseph. The significance of the intense contemplation of a tortured body—possibly made by one whose sexual nature was

* See L. Asseline's *Mary Alacoque and the Worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

undergoing a process of suppression—is unmistakable.*

On these and similar cases Professor William James makes the following comment:—

"To the medical mind these ecstasies signify nothing but suggested hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstition, and a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria. Undoubtedly these pathological conditions have existed in many and possibly in all the cases, but that fact tells us nothing about the value for knowledge of the consciousness which they induce. To pass a spiritual judgment upon these states, we must not content ourselves with superficial medical talk, but enquire into their fruits for life." †

Now the question is really not what these ecstasies suggest to the 'medical mind,' as though that were a type of mind quite unfitted to pass judgment. It is a question of what the facts suggest to any mind judging the behaviour of a person under the influence of strong religious emotion exactly as it would judge anyone under any other strong emotional pressure. And if it be possible to explain these states in terms of known physiological and mental action, what warranty have we for rejecting this and preferring in its stead an explanation that is both unprovable and unnecessary? And one would be excused for thinking that cases which certainly involve some sort of abnormal nervous action are precisely those in which the medical mind should be called on to express an opinion. What is meant by passing 'a spiritual judg-

* See *St. Teresa of Spain*, by H. H. Colvill, and *Saint Teresa*, by H. Joli.

† *Varieties*, p. 413.

ment' upon these states is not exactly clear, unless it means judging them in terms of the historic supernatural interpretation. But that is precisely the interpretation which is challenged by the 'medical mind.'

I do not see how any enquiry "into their fruits for life" can affect a rational estimate of the nature of these mystical states. Mysticism adds nothing to the native disposition of a person. It merely gives their energies a new turn, a new direction. What they were before the experience they remain, substantially, afterwards. That is why we find religious mystics of every variety. Some energetically practical; others dreamily unpractical. Professor James admits this in saying that "the other-worldliness encouraged by the mystical consciousness makes this over-abstraction from practical life peculiarly liable to befall mystics in whom the character is naturally passive and the intellect feeble; but in natively strong minds and characters we find quite opposite results."* And when it is further admitted that "the mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own," but "is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies, provided only they can find a place in their framework for its peculiar emotional mood," mysticism seems reduced to an emotional development on all fours with emotional development in other directions. It is not peculiar to religious minds because "it has no specific intellectual content." It is amorphous, so to speak. And it may form diverse 'matrimonial alliances' precisely because it does not point to a

* *Varieties*, p. 413.

hidden world of reality, but is merely indicative of tense emotional moods. In the face of nature the non-theistic Richard Jeffries experiences all the feelings of mental enlargement and emotional transports that Mary Alacoque or Santa Teresa experienced in their visions of the 'Risen Christ.'

It is idle, then, to sneer at 'medical materialism,' and stigmatise it as superficial. Many people are constitutionally afraid of words, and there is nothing that arouses prejudice so quickly as a name. But it is really not a question of materialism, medical or non-medical. It is a mere matter of applying knowledge and common sense to the cases before us. Are we to take the subject's explanation of his or her mental states as authoritative, so far as their nature is concerned; or are we to treat them as symptoms demanding the skilled analysis of the specialist? If the former, how can we differentiate between the mystic and the admittedly hysterical patient? If the latter, what ground is there for placing the mystic in a category of his own? Rational and scientific analysis will certainly take far more notice of the nature of the feelings excited than of the object towards which they are directed. Here is the case of a young lady, given by Dr. Moreau, in his *Morbid Psychology*:—

"During my long hours of sleeplessness in the night my beloved Saviour began to make Himself manifest to me. Pondering over the meditations of St. François de Sales on the *Song of Songs*, I seemed to feel all my faculties suspended, and crossing my arms upon my chest, I awaited in a sort of dread what might be revealed to me.... I saw the Redeemer veritably in the flesh.... He extended Himself beside me, pressed me

so closely that I could feel His crown of thorns, and the nails in His feet and hands, while He pressed His lips over mine, giving me the most ravishing kiss of a divine Spouse, and sending a delicious thrill through my entire body."*

Get rid of the narcotising effect of theological associations by eliminating the name of Jesus and other religious terms from this case, and from the others already cited, and no one would have the least doubt as to their real nature. Given a condition of physical health in these cases, with conditions that favoured social activity, healthy intercourse with the opposite sex, culminating in marriage and parenthood, can there be any doubt that this species of religious ecstasy would have been non-existent? If, as Tylor says, the refectory door would many a time have closed the gates of heaven, happy family life would in a vast number of cases have prevented those religio-erotic trances which have played so powerful a part in the history of supernaturalism. Most people will agree with Dr. Maudsley:—

"The ecstatic trances of such saintly women as Catherine Sienne and St. Theresa, in which they believed themselves to be visited by their Saviour and to be received as veritable spouses into His bosom, were, though they knew it not, little better than vicarious sexual orgasm; a condition of things which the intense contemplation of the naked male figure, carved or sculptured in all its proportions on a cross, is more fitted to produce in young women of susceptible nervous temperament than people are apt to consider. Every experienced physician must have met with in-

* Cited by J. F. Nisbet, *The Insanity of Genius*, p. 248.

stances of single and childless women who have devoted themselves with extraordinary zeal to habitual religious exercises, and who, having gone insane as a culmination of their emotional fervour, have straightway exhibited the saddest mixture of religious and erotic symptoms—a boiling over of lust in voice, face, gestures, under the pitiful degradation of disease.... The fanatical religious sects, such as the Shakers and the like, which spring up from time to time in communities and disgust them by the offensive way in which they mingle love and religion, are inspired in great measure by sexual feeling; on the one hand, there is probably the cunning of a hypocritical knave, or the self-deception of a half-insane one, using the weaknesses of weak women to minister to his vanity or his lust under a religious guise; on the other hand, there is an exaggerated self-feeling, often rooted in the sexual passion, which is unwittingly fostered under the cloak of religious emotion, and which is apt to conduct to madness or to sin. In such cases the holy kiss owes its warmth to the sexual impulse, which inspires it, consciously or unconsciously, and the mystical religious union of the sexes is fitted to issue in a less spiritual union."*

Many manuals of devotion will be found to furnish the same kind of evidence as biographical narratives concerning the intimate relations that exists between sexuality and religious feeling. What has just been said may be repeated here, namely, that if the religious associations were dispelled, there would be no mistaking the nature of feelings that originated much

* *Pathology of Mind*, p. 144. Also Mercier, *Sanity and Insanity*, pp. 223, 281.

of this class of writing, or the feelings to which they appeal. The serious fact is that the appeal is there whether we recognise it or not, and it is a question worthy of serious consideration whether the unwary imagination of the young may be not as surely debauched by certain books of devotion as by a frankly erotic production. It is not without reason that d'Israeli the elder, in an essay omitted from all editions of his book after the first, remarked that "poets are amorous, lovers are poetical, but saints are both."* Take, for example, the following from a collection of old English homilies, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries:—

"Jesus, my holy love, my sure sweetness! Jesus, my heart, my joy, my soul-heal! Jesus, sweet Jesus, my darling, my life, my light, my balm, my honey-drop! ... Kindle me with the blaze of Thy enlightening love. Let me be Thy leman, and teach me to love Thee.... Oh, that I might behold how Thou stretchedst Thyself for me on the cross. Oh, that I might cast myself

* *Miscellanies*, 1796, p. 365. From the same essay I take the following: "Even the ceremonies of religion, both in ancient and in modern times, have exhibited the grossest indecencies. Priests in all ages have been the successful panders of the human heart, and have introduced in the solemn worship of the divinity, incitements, gratifications, and representations, which the pen of the historian must refuse to describe. Often has the sensible Catholic blushed amidst his devotions, and I have seen chapels surrounded by pictures of lascivious attitudes, and the obsolete amours of saints revived by the pencil of some Aretine. ... Their homilies were manuals of love, and the more religious they became, the more depraved were their imaginations. In the nunnery the love of Jesus was the most abandoned of passions, and the ideal espousal was indulged at the cost of the feeble heart of many a solitary beauty" (pp. 369–70).

between those same arms, so very wide outspread.... Oh, that I were in Thy arms, in Thy arms so stretchedst and outspread on the cross."

Or this, from the same collection:—

"Sweet Jesus, my love, my darling, my Lord, my Saviour, my balm, sweeter is the remembrance of Thee than honey in the mouth. Who is there that may not love Thy lovely face? Whose heart is so hard that may not melt at the remembrance of Thee? Oh! who may not love Thee, lovely Jesus? Jesus, my precious darling, my love, my life, my beloved, my most worthy of love, my heart's balm, Thou art lovesome in countenance, Thou art altogether bright. All angels' life is to look upon Thy face, for Thy cheer is so marvellously lovesome and pleasant to look upon.... Thou art so bright, and so white that the sun would be pale if compared to Thy blissful countenance. If I, then, love any man for beauty, I will love Thee, my dear life, my mother's fairest son."*

The language of erotic piety figures much more prominently in Roman Catholic medieval writings than in Protestant literature. This is not because an appeal to the same feelings is absent from the religious literature of Protestantism, it is mainly due to the fact that more modern conditions leads to a less intense religious appeal, while the broadening of social life encourages a more natural outlet for all aspects of human nature. Still, the following expression of a young lady convert of Wesley's offers a fair parallel to the specimen given above. It is taken from Southey's *Life of Wesley*:—

* From a collection published by the Early English Text Society, 1868, pp. 182–4, 268.

"Oh, mighty, powerful, happy change! The love of God was shed abroad in my heart, and a flame kindled there with pains so violent, and yet so very ravishing, that my body was almost torn asunder. I sweated, I trembled, I fainted, I sang. Oh, I thought my head was a fountain of water. I was dissolved in love. My beloved is mine, and I am His. He has all charms; He has ravished my heart; He is my comforter, my friend, my all. Oh, I am sick of love. He is altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. Oh, how Jesus fills, Jesus extends, Jesus overwhelms the soul in which He lives."

The *Imitation of Christ* has been described by more than one writer as a manual of eroticism, and certainly the chapters "The Wonderful Effects of Divine Love," and "Of the Proof of a True Lover," might well be cited in defence of this view. In the following canticle of St. Francis of Assisi it does not seem possible to distinguish a substantial difference between it and a frankly avowed love poem:—

"Into love's furnace I am cast,
Into love's furnace I am cast,
I burn, I languish, pine, and waste.
Oh, love divine, how sharp thy dart!
How deep the wound that galls my heart!
As wax in heat, so, from above,
My smitten soul dissolves in love.
I live, yet languishing I die,
While in thy furnace bound I lie."*

It would certainly be possible to furnish exact parallels from volumes of secular verse that would be strictly 'taboo' among those who fail to see anything objectionable in verses like the above when written in con-

* G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 210.

nection with religion. Such people fail to recognise that their attractiveness lies in the hidden appeal to amatory feeling, and owe their origin to the suppressed or perverted sexual passion of their author. We must not allow ourselves to be blinded by the consideration as to whether the object of adoration be an earthly or a heavenly one. Men and women have not distinct feelings that are aroused as their objective differs, but the same feelings directed now in one direction, now in another. The direction of these feelings, their exciting cause, are sheer environmental accidents. How can one resist the implications of the following, from a devotional work widely circulated amongst the women of France:—

"Praise to Jesus, praise His power,
Praise His sweet allurements.
Praise to Jesus, when His goodness
Reduces me to nakedness;
Praise to Jesus when He says to me,
My sister, my dove, my beautiful one!
Praise to Jesus in all my steps,
Praise to His amorous charms.
Praise to Jesus when His loving mouth
Touches mine in a loving kiss.
Praise to Jesus when His gentle caresses
Overwhelm me with chaste joys.
Praise to Jesus whenat His leisure
He allows me to kiss Him."*

Against this we may place the following hymn, sung at an American camp meeting of some thousands of persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five:—

* *Les Perles de Saint François de Sales*, 1871. Cited by Bloch, p. 111.

"Blessed Lily of the Valley, oh, how fair is He;
He is mine, I am His.
Sweeter than the angels' music is His voice to me;
He is mine, I am His.
Where the lilies fair are blooming by the waters calm
There He leads me and upholds me by His strong right arm.

All the air is love around me—I can feel no harm;
He is mine, I am His."*

Special significance is given to this reference by the age of those who composed the gathering. This period embraces the years during which sexual maturity is attained, and the organism experiences important physiological and psychological changes. The consequence is that the atmosphere is, so to say, charged with unsuspected sex feeling, and it is not surprising that many complaints have been made of immorality following such gatherings. The organism is then peculiarly liable to suggestion in all forms. Along with the imitativeness of early years there is something of the decisive initiative of maturity. These qualities wisely guided might be turned to the great advantage of both the individual and of the community. Mere incitement by religious revivalism can result in little else than misdirection and injury. It should be the most obvious of truths that the attractiveness of hymns such as the one given, with the keen delight in the suggested pictures, lies in their yielding—all unknown, perhaps, to those participating—satisfaction to feelings that are very frequently imperious in their demands, and are at all times astonishingly pervasive in their influence.

Much valuable light is thrown upon this aspect of

* Davenport's *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 29.

the subject by a study of human behaviour under the influence of actual disease. Of late years much useful work has been done in this direction, and our knowledge of normal psychology greatly helped by a study of abnormal mental states.* This is mainly because in disease we are able to observe the operation of tendencies that are unobscured by the restraints and inhibitions created by education and social convention. And one of the most striking, and to many startling, things observed is the close relation existing between erotic mania and religious delusion. The person who at one time feels himself under direct religious inspiration, or who imagines himself to be the incarnation of a divine personage, will at another time exhibit the most shocking obscenity in action and language. Sir T. S. Clouston furnishes a very striking case of this character, which he cites in order to show "the common mixture of religious and sexual emotion."† I do not reproduce it here because of its grossly obscene character; but, save for coarseness of language, it does not differ materially from illustrations already given. Almost any of the text-books will supply cases illustrating the connection between sexualism and religion, a connection generally recognised as the opinions cited already clearly show.

Dr. Mercier, in dealing with the connection between sexualism and religion, which he says "has long been recognised, but never accounted for," traces it to a feeling of, or desire for self-sacrifice common to both.

* See, for example, *Conduct and its Disorders*, by Dr. C. Mercier; *Psycho-Pathological Researches*, by Dr. Boris Sidis; and *Abnormal Psychology*, by I. H. Coriat.

† *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, p. 584.

Certainly sacrifice in some form—of food, weapons, land, money, or bodily inconvenience—is a feature present in every religion more or less. And it is quite certain that not merely the fact, but the desire for some amount of sacrifice, forms "an integral, fundamental, and preponderating element" in the sexual emotion. Dr. Mercier further believes that the benevolence founded on religious emotion has its origin in sexual emotion, which is, again, extremely likely. This community of origin would allow for the transformation of one into the other, and supplies a key to the language of lover-like devotion and self-abnegation which is so prominent in religious devotional literature. The importance attached to dress is also very suggestive; for here, again, the element of sacrifice expresses itself in the cultivation of a studied repulsiveness to the normal attractiveness of costume. "Thus," says Dr. Mercier, "we find that the self-sacrificial vagaries of the rejected lover and of the religious devotee own a common origin and nature. The hook and spiny kennel of the fakir, the pillar of St. Simeon Stylites, the flagellum of the monk, the sombre garments of the nun, the silence of the Trappists, the defiantly hideous costume of the hallelujah lass, and the mortified sobriety of the district visitor, have at bottom the same origin as the rags of Cardenio, the cage of Don Quixote de la Mancha, and the yellow stockings and crossed garters of Malvolio."*

Professor Granger, who at times comes very near the truth, says:—

"There is something profoundly philosophical in the use of *The Song of Songs* to typify the communion

* *Sanity and Insanity*, chap. viii.

of the soul with its ideal. The passion which is expressed by the Shulamite for her earthly lover in such glowing phrases becomes the type of the love of the soul towards God."*

One fails to see the profoundly philosophic nature of the selection. *The Song of Songs* is a frankly erotic love poem, written with no other aim than is common to such poetry, and its spiritualisation is due to the same process of reinterpretation that is applied to other parts of the Bible in order to make them agreeable to modern thought. Had it not been in the Bible, Christians would have found it neither profoundly philosophical nor spiritually illuminating; and, as a matter of fact, similar effusions are selected by Christians from non-Christian writings as proofs of their sensual character. The real significance of its use in religious worship is that it gives a marked expression to feelings that crave an outlet. And the lesson is that sexual feeling cannot be eliminated from life; it can only be diverted or disguised. Some expression it will find—here in open perversion resulting in positive vice, there in obsession that leads to a half-insane asceticism, and elsewhere the creation of the unconsciously salacious with an unhealthy fondness for dabbling in questions that refer to the illicit relations of the sexes.

"One of the reasons why popular religion in England," says Professor Granger, "seems to be coming to the limits of its power, is that it has contented itself so largely with the commonplace motives which, after all, find sufficient exercise in the ordinary duties of life." Here, again, is a curious obtuseness to a plain

* *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 178.

but important truth. With what else should a healthy religion associate itself but the ordinary motives or feelings of human life? With what else has religion always associated itself? Far from that being the source of the weakness of modern religion, it is its only genuine source of strength. If religion can so associate itself with the ordinary facts and feelings of life that these are unintelligible or poorer without religion, then religious people have nothing to fear. But if it be true, as Professor Granger implies, that life in its normal moods can receive complete gratification apart from religion, then the outlook is very different. From a merely historic point of view it is true that as men have found explanations of phenomena, and gratifications of feelings apart from religion, the latter has lost a deal of its power. This is seen in the growth of the physical sciences, and also, although in a smaller measure, in sociology and morals.

This, however, opens up the enquiry, previously indicated, as to how far the whole range of human life may be satisfactorily explained in the complete absence of religion or supernaturalism. And with this we are not now directly concerned. What we are concerned with is to show that from one direction at least supernaturalism has derived strength from a misinterpretation of the facts. These facts, once interpreted as clear evidence for supernaturalism, are now seen to be susceptible to a different explanation. But they have nevertheless played their part in creating as part of the social heritage a diffused sense of the reality of supernatural intercourse. It is not, then, a question of religion losing power because it has contented itself with commonplace motives, and because these have

now found satisfaction in ordinary life. It is rather a question of the adequacy of science to deal with facts that have been taken to lie outside the scientific order. Has science the knowledge or the ability to deal with the extraordinary as well as with the ordinary facts of life? I believe it has. The facts we have passed in review *are* amenable to scientific treatment, for the reason that they belong to a class with which the physician of to-day finds himself in constant contact. And it is too often overlooked that the belief in the existence and influence of a supersensible world is itself only a theory put forward in explanation of certain classes of facts, and like all theories it becomes superfluous once a simpler theory is made possible.

CHAPTER SIX
THE STREAM OF TENDENCY

IT SHOULD HARDLY NEED POINTING out that the facts presented in the last chapter are not offered as an attempt at the—to use Professor William James's expression—"reinterpretation of religion as perverted sexuality." Nor, so far as the present writer is aware, has anyone ever so presented them. The expression, indeed, seems almost a deliberate mis-statement of a position in order to make its rebuttal easier. Obviously the idea of religion must be already in existence before it could be utilised for the purpose of explaining any group of phenomena. But if the biographic and other facts described have any value whatever, they are at least strong presumptive evidence in favour of the position that in very many cases a perverted or unsatisfied sexuality has been at the root of a great deal of the world's emotional piety. Of course, the strong religious belief must be in existence beforehand. But given this, and add thereto a sexual nature imperious in its demands and yet denied legitimate outlet, and we have the conditions present for its promptings being interpreted as the fruits of supernatural influence. It is not a reinterpretation of *religion* that is attempted, but a reinterpretation of phenomena that have been erroneously called religious. And on all sides the need for this reinterpretation is becoming clear. Over sixty years ago Renan wrote, "A rigorous psychological analysis would class the innate religious instinct of women in the same category with the sexual instinct,"* and since then a very much more detailed knowledge of both physiology and psychology

* *The Future of Science*, p. 465.

has furnished a multitude of data for an exhaustive study of the whole question.

In the present chapter our interest is mainly historical. And for various reasons, chief amongst which is that interested readers may the more easily follow up the study should they feel so inclined, the survey has been restricted to the history of that religion with which we are best acquainted—Christianity. Moreover, if we are to form a correct judgment of the part played in the history of religions by the misinterpretations already noted, it is necessary to trace the extent to which they have influenced men and women in a collective capacity. For the striking fact is that, in spite of the purification of the sexual relations being one of the avowed objects of Christianity, in spite, too, of the attempts of the official churches to suppress them, the history of Christianity has been dogged by outbreaks of sexual extravagance, by the continuous emergence of erotico-religious sects, claiming Christian teachings as the authority for their actions. We need not discuss the legitimacy of their inferences. We are concerned solely with a chronicle of historic facts so far as they can be ascertained; and these have a certain significance of their own, as events, quite apart from their reasonableness or desirability.

A part cause of the movements we are about to describe may have been a violent reaction against an extravagant asceticism. Something may also be due to the fact that over-concentration of mind upon a particular evil is apt to defeat its end by the mere force of unconscious suggestion in the contrary direction. But in all probability much was due to the presence of certain elements inherited by Christianity from the

older religions. At any rate, those whose minds are filled with the idea that sexual extravagance on a collective scale and under the cloak of religion is either a modern phenomenon, or was unknown to the early history of Christianity, would do well to revise their opinions in the light of ascertainable facts. No less a person than the Rev. S. Baring-Gould has reminded us that criticism discloses "on the shining face of primitive Christianity rents and craters undreamt of in our old simplicity," and also asserts "that there was in the breast of the newborn Church an element of antinomianism, not latent, but in virulent activity, is a fact as capable of demonstration as any conclusion in a science which is not exact."*

There would be little value in a study of these erotico-religious movements if they involved only a detection of individual lust consciously using religion as a cloak for its gratification. Such a conclusion is a fatally easy one, but it does little justice to the chief people concerned, and it is quite lacking in historical perspective. In most cases the initiators of these strange sects have put forward a philosophy of religion as a justification of their teaching, and only a slight knowledge of this is enough to prove that we are face to face with a phenomenon of much greater significance than mere immorality. This may be recognised even in the pages of the New Testament itself. It is not a practice that is there denounced; it is a teaching that is repudiated. And one sees the same thing at later periods. The conviction on the one side that certain actions are unlawful, is met on the other side with the conviction that they are perfectly legitimate.

* *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, Preface, p. 7.

Conviction is met with conviction. Each side expresses itself in terms of religion; the ethical aspect is incidental or subordinate. It is a contest of opposing religious beliefs and practices.

The real nature of the conflict is often obscured by the fact of social opinion and the social forces generally being on the side of the more normal expression of sexual life. This, however, is no more than a necessity of the situation. The continuance of a healthful social life is dependent upon the maintenance of a certain balance in the relations of the sexes, and anything that strikes at this strikes at social life as a whole. In such cases we have, therefore, to allow for the operation of social selection, which is always on the side of the more normal type. From this it follows that although a small body of people may exemplify a variation that is in itself socially disastrous, the main forces of social life will prevent its ever assuming large dimensions. Moreover, a large body of people, such as is represented by a church holding a commanding position in society, will be forced to come to terms with the permanent tendencies of social life, and will either suppress undesirable variations or expel them. It thus happens that while the larger and more dominant churches have been on the side of normal, regularised expressions of the sexual life, abnormal variations have constantly arisen and have been denounced by them. But the significant feature is that they have arisen within the churches, and most commonly during periods of great religious stress or excitement.

These tendencies, as the Rev. S. Baring-Gould has pointed out, existed in the very earliest days of Christianity. It is quite apparent from Paul's writings that

as early as the date of the First Epistle to the Corinthians some of the more objectionable features of the older Pagan worship had shown themselves in the Church. The doctrine of 'spiritual wifehood' appeared at a very early date in the Church, and its teachers cited even St. Paul himself as their authority. Their claim was based upon Paul's declaration (1 Cor. ix. 5) that he had power to lead about "a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas." Curiously enough, commentators have never agreed as to what Paul meant by this expression. The word translated may mean either wife, or sister, or woman. Had it been wife in the ordinary sense, it does not appear that at that date there would have been any room for scandal. The clear fact is, however, that others claimed a like privilege; the privilege was not always restricted to one woman, and the practice, if not general, became not uncommon, and furnished the ground for scandal for a long period. Two epistles, wrongly attributed to St. Clement of Rome, and dating from some time in the second century, condemn the practice of young people living together under the cloak of religion, and specially warns virgins against cohabiting with the clergy and so giving offence. That the practice was difficult to suppress is shown by its being condemned by several church councils—Antioch in 210, Nicea in 325, and Elvira in 350.* At a later date a much more elaborate theory has been built on Paul's claim. The Pauline Church has found several expressions both in England and America within recent times.† These sects have claimed that

* See Baring-Gould's *Life of St. Paul*, pp. 450–1. † See Hepworth Dixon's curious work, *Spiritual Wives*, 1888, 2 vols.

both St. Paul and the woman with whom he travelled were in a state of grace, and, therefore, above all law. We do not mean the maintenance of an ascetic relationship, but the normal relation of husband and wife. It is really the doctrine of 'Free Love' with a spiritual warranty instead of a secular one.

This doctrine of religious 'Free Love' rests upon a twofold basis. First, it was held that, apart from a wife after the flesh, one might also have a wife after the spirit, and this spiritual union might exist side by side with the fleshly one, and with different persons. A great impetus appears to have been given to this theory from Germany, many of the originators of the American sects of Free Lovers being Germans. Secondly, it was held that a Christian in a state of grace was absolved from laws that were binding upon other people. His actions were no longer subject to the categories of right and wrong; as it was said, to one in a state of grace all things were lawful, even though all things might not be expedient. Some went the length of teaching that not only were all things lawful, but all things were desirable. Separating by a sharp division things that influenced the soul from things that influenced the body, it was openly taught by some of the early sects that nothing done by the body could injure the soul, and so could not affect its salvation. Reversing the practice of asceticism, which sought to crush bodily passions by a course of deprivation, it was taught that all kinds of forbidden conduct might be practised in order to demonstrate the soul's superiority. There is no question whatever that this tendency was very prominent in the early Christian Church. It was not there as something hidden, some-

thing of which men ought to be ashamed; it was an avowed teaching, claiming full religious sanction. "The Church," says Baring-Gould, "trembled on the verge of becoming an immoral sect." The same writer also says:—

"This *teaching* of immorality in the Church is a startling feature, and it seems to have been pursued by some who called themselves apostles as well as by those who assumed to be prophets. In the Corinthian Church even the elders encouraged incest. Now, it is not possible to explain this phenomenon except on the ground that Paul's argument as to the Law being overridden had been laid hold of and elevated into a principle. These teachers did not wink at lapses into immorality, but defiantly urged on the converts to the Gospel to commit adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness . . . as a protest against those who contended that the moral law as given on the tables was still binding upon the Church." *

A certain detachment from modern conditions, and from modern frames of mind, is essential to an adequate appreciation of what has been said. Looking at these events through the distorting medium of an altogether different social atmosphere, one is apt to attribute them to the operation of lawless desire, and so have done with it. This, however, is to overlook the fact that we are dealing with a society in which sexual symbols were common in religious worship, and in which theories of the religious life were propounded and accepted which to-day would be regarded as little less than maniacal. Unquestionably even then, once the situation had established itself it

* *Study of St. Paul*, p. 458.

would be utilised by those of a coarser nature for mere sensual gratification. But practices such as we know existed, on the scale we have every reason for believing they were, could never have been had they not taken the form of an intense conviction. To assume otherwise is equal to arguing that because men have entered the Church from mere love of power or lust for wealth, the Church owed its establishment to the play of these motives. It is true that those who opposed these religio-erotic sects accused them of immorality, but it is the form these teachings assumed to the members of the impeached sects, not how they appeared to their enemies, that is important. Eroticism taught and practised as a religious conviction—that is the essential and significant feature of the situation. Not to grasp this is to fail to realise the vital fact embodied in the phenomena under consideration. We are not dealing with mere sensualists, even though we may be dealing with what is largely an expression of sensualism. It is sensualism expressed as, and sanctioned by, religious conviction that is the vital fact of the situation.

One of the earliest Christian institutions around which scandals gathered was that of the Agapæ, or love-feasts. From the outset the Pagan writers asserted that these love-feasts were new versions of various old orgiastic practices, some of which were still current, others of which had been suppressed by the Roman government. There is no doubt that they were the grounds of very serious accusations against the Christians. On the other hand, it must be remembered that, at the outset at least, these charges were indignantly rejected by the Christians. The Aga-

pæ were called indiscriminately Feasts of Love and Feasts of Charity. Each member, male and female, greeted each other with a holy kiss, and the institution was described by Tertullian as "a support of love, a solace of purity, a check on riches, a discipline of weakness." These love-feasts were held on important occasions, such as a marriage, a death, or the anniversary of a martyrdom. Some churches celebrated them weekly. From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the feasts began about nightfall, and continued till after midnight, or even till daybreak. It was only natural that mixed assemblies of men and women that gathered in this manner, and where there was eating and drinking, should create scandal. It is absolutely certain that some of this scandal had a basis in fact. The Rev. S. Baring-Gould confesses that "at Corinth, and certainly elsewhere, among excitable people, the wine, the heat, the exaltation of emotion, led to orgiastic ravings, the jabbering of disconnected, unintelligible words, to fits, convulsions, pious exclamations, and incoherent ravings." And unless St. Paul was deliberately slandering his fellow-believers worse things than these occurred.

Generally, even by non-Christian writers, it has been assumed that the Agapæ commenced as a perfectly harmless, even admirable institution, and afterwards degenerated, and so gave genuine cause for scandal. It is not easy to see that this opinion rests on anything better than a mere prejudice. It is true that there is no unmistakable evidence to the contrary, but no clear evidence is to be found in its behalf. The Agapæ was not, after all, an essentially Christian institution. Similar gatherings existed among the Pagans, more or less

orgiastic in character. And even though at first some of the more extreme forms were avoided amongst the Christians, it is not improbable, on the face of it, that some kind of sexual extravagance or symbolism was present from the outset. At any rate, as I have said, the charges were made, first by Pagans, afterwards by Christians against other Christians. The charges were persistent, and were made in districts far removed from each other. Says Lecky: "When the Pagans accused the Christians of indulging in orgies of gross licentiousness, the first apologist, while repudiating the charge, was careful to add, of the heretics, 'Whether or not these people commit those shameful acts . . . I know not.' In a few years the language of doubt and insinuation was exchanged for that of direct assertion; and if we may believe St. Irenæus and St. Clement of Alexandria, the followers of Carpocrates, the Marcionites, and some other gnostic sects habitually indulged, in their secret meetings, in acts of impurity and licentiousness as hideous and as monstrous as can be conceived, and their conduct was one of the causes of the persecution of the orthodox."* Tertullian accused some of the sects of practising incestuous intercourse at the Agapæ. Ambrose compared the institution to the Pagan Parentalia. Clement says, probably referring to the Agapæ, "the shameless use of the rite occasions foul suspicion and evil reports." The first epistle on Virginity by the Pseudo-Clement (probably written in the second century) admits the existence of immorality by saying, "Others eat and drink with them (*i.e.* the virgins) at feasts, and indulge in loose behaviour and much uncleanness, such

* *History of European Morals*, i. p. 417.

as ought not to be among those who have elected holiness for themselves." Justin Martyr, referring to certain sects, says more cautiously: "Whether or not these people commit these shameful acts (the putting out of lights, and indulging in promiscuous intercourse) I know not." Others are more precise in their charges. That the Agapæ became the legitimate cause of complaint is admitted by all. The only question is whether it was the institution itself or the public mind in relation to it that underwent a change. Eventually, on the avowed ground of evil conduct, the Agapæ were forbidden by the Council of Carthage, 391, of Orleans, 541, and of Constantinople, 680.

The whole subject is obscure, but the one certain and significant thing is that charges of licentiousness were connected with the Agapæ from the outset. These may at first have been unfounded or exaggerated. On the other hand, it is quite probable that just as Christianity continued Pagan ceremonies in other directions, so there was also a carrying over into the Church of some of the sexual rites and ceremonies connected with earlier forms of worship. And we know that the principle of Antinomianism, a prolific cause of evil at all times, was active amongst the Christians from the outset.

It is almost impossible to say at this distance how many sects exhibiting marked erotic tendencies appeared in the early Christian centuries. Many must have disappeared and left no trace of their existence. But there can be no question that they were fairly numerous. The extensive sect, or sects, of the gnostics contained in its teachings elements that at least paved the way for the conduct with which other Christians

charged them, although the charges made may not have been true of all. To some of the gnostic sects belongs the teaching—quite in accord with the doctrine of the evil nature of the world, that liberation from the 'Law' was one of the first conditions of spiritual freedom. From this came the teaching, subsequently held by numerous other sects, that those born of the Spirit could not be defiled by any acts of the flesh, and that so-called vicious actions were rather to be encouraged as providing experience useful to spiritual welfare. Some branches of the gnostics had 'spiritual marriages,' similar to what existed in India in the Sakti rites already described. Thus the Adamites, a rather obscure gnostic sect of the second century, attempted to imitate the Edenic state by condemning marriage and abandoning clothing. Their assemblies were held underground, and on entering the place of worship both sexes stripped themselves naked, and in that state performed their ceremonies. They called their church Paradise, from which all dissentients were promptly expelled. The Adamites themselves claimed that their object was to extirpate desire by familiarising the senses to strict control. Their religious opponents gave a very different account of the practice, and it is not difficult to realise, whatever may have been the motive of the founders, the consequences of such a practice. It is curious, by the way, to observe how strong religious excitement seems to lead people to discard clothing. Thus, during the Crusade of 1203–42 the women crusaders rushed about the streets in a state of nudity.* During the wars of the League in France, men and women walked naked in procession

* Cutten, *Psychological Christianity*, p. 157.

headed by the clergy.* Other examples of this curious practice might be given.

The Nicolaitanes, a second-century sect referred to in the New Testament (Rev. ii. 14), were accused of practising religious prostitution. So also were the Manichæans, a very numerous sect, against whom the charges were of a much more detailed character. With them the ceremonial violation of a virgin is said to have formed a part of their regular ritual, and that their meetings frequently ended in an orgy of promiscuous intercourse.† As both these acts are found in connection with other religious ceremonies, and, as will be seen later, have persisted until recent times, the story does not sound so incredible as otherwise it might. The difficulty of deciding definitely is intensified by the fact of the Manichæans being split into a number of sects, and statements true of some might be untrue of others. So we find St. Augustine, who had been a Manichæan, declaring that if all did not practise licentious rites, one sect (the Catharists) did, believing that they could only mortify the flesh by the exercise of bad instincts, since the flesh proceeded from demons. St. Augustine himself confesses to have taken part in various phallic ceremonies before his conversion. "I myself," he says, "when a young man used to go sometimes to the sacrilegious entertainments and spectacles; I saw the priests raving in religious excitement, and heard the choristers; I took pleasure in the shameful games which were celebrated in honour of gods and goddesses, of the Virgin Cœlestia, and of Berecynthia, the mother of all gods. And on the day con-

* Sanger, *History of Prostitution*, p. 116.

† See Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects*, art. "Manichæans."

secrated to her purification, there were sung before her couch productions so obscene and filthy to the ear —I do not say of the mother of the gods, but of the mother of any senator or honest man—nay, so impure that not even the mother of the foul-mouthed players themselves could have formed one of the audience."*

The Carpocratians, who claimed to be a branch of the Gnostics, taught that faith and charity were alone necessary virtues: all others were useless. There is nothing evil in itself, and life only becomes complete when all so-called blemishes are fully displayed in conduct. Their leader "not only allowed his disciples a full liberty to sin, but recommended a vicious course of life as a matter of obligation and necessity; asserting that eternal salvation was only attainable by those who had committed all sorts of crimes.... It was the will of God that all things should be possessed in common, the female sex not excepted." †

A little later we have the sect of the Agapetæ. They rejected marriage as an institution, and permitted unrestrained intercourse between the sexes. St. Jerome, alluding to this sect, says: "It is a shame even to allude to the true facts. Whence did the pest of the Agapetæ creep into the Church? Whence is this new title of wives without marriage rites? Whence this new class of concubines? I will infer more. Whence these harlots cleaving to one man? They occupy the same house, a single chamber, often a single bed, and call us suspicious if we think anything of it. The brother deserts his virgin sister, the virgin despises her unmarried brother, and seeks a stranger, and since

* *De Civitate Dei*, ii. 4. † Mosheim, *Cent.* 2, chap. v. sec. 4.

they pretend to be aiming at the same object, they ask for the spiritual consolation of each other that they may enjoy the pleasures of the flesh." *

This form of extravagance does not appear to have been limited to a single sect. It was more or less general during the ascendancy of asceticism. Tertullian says that the desire to enjoy the reputation of virginity led to much immorality, the effects of which were concealed by infanticide. The Council of Antioch lamented the practice of unmarried men and women sharing the same room. In 450, the Anchorites of Palestine are described as herding together without distinction of sex, and with no garments but a breech-clout.† The practice of priests travelling about with women, mothers and wives, and the scandals created thereby, is referred to in regulation after regulation. Although legislated against, it never entirely disappeared, and eventually led to a recognised priestly concubinage—recognised, that is, by public opinion, although condemned by the Church.

There is no need to go over even the names of all the numerous sects that appeared during the early centuries manifesting curious features concerning sexual relations. When suppressed in one form they reappeared in another, and were unusually prominent during seasons of religious unrest. Many of the teachings already noted made their appearance again with the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. Some of these sects took their stand on the Pauline teaching, "The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ hath made me free from

* *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 13.

† Lea, *Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 1884, p. 42.

the law of sin and death," and claimed freedom from sin, no matter what their actions. The "Brethren of the Free Spirit" carried women about with them, held midnight assemblies, and, according to Mosheim, attended these meetings in a state of nudity. The Ranters, the Spirituels of Geneva, the Berghards, the Flagellants, the Molinists, were all accused of sexual misconduct in their assemblies. One of the specific teachings of the last-named body, as condemned by the Inquisition, ran as follows: "God, to humble us, permits in certain perfect souls that the devil should make them commit certain acts. In this case, and in others, which without the permission of God, would be guilty, there is no sin because there is no consent. It may happen, that this violent movement, which excites to carnal acts, may take place in two persons, a man and a woman, at the same instant."*

It has been pointed out that the dominant Church made continuous efforts to suppress these sects, but the remarkable thing is that they should so often reappear, and always with strong claims to existence on the basis of religious conviction. That a number of men and women should seek gratification of their sensual feelings in ways not countenanced by the laws of normal life need not excite surprise. There always have been and always will be such. But to do this in the name of religion, and with a persistency as great as that of the religious idea itself, is a phenomenon that surely deserves more attention than it ordinarily receives. Nor can it be said with justice that these sects began in mere conscious lust. They ended there, true; more or less disguised, it may always have been pre-

* Cited by Michelet, *Priests, Women, and Families*, p. 130.

sent, but those who initiated them believed that they were justified in doing so by religious principles, and appealed to those principles to justify their conduct. Why should this have been the case? Why should conduct of which men and women are ashamed in the social sphere, and which their social sense promptly condemns, in the religious sphere be crowned with the dignity of lofty principles and fought for with the fervour of intense conviction? So long as theologians leave that question unanswered, their arguments are simply wide of the real issue.

Naturally, the closer we get to our own day, and to times when religious feeling is more vigorously controlled by purely social forces, these manifestations of sexuality become less frequent, less widely spread, and more transient in character. Still they do occur. For reasons that do not concern us here, America has in recent years been a favourable ground for these religio-sexual developments. A sympathetic account of many of these American sects will be found in Hepworth Dixon's *Spiritual Wives*, with accounts of similar sects in Germany and England. In some cases many of the features of the early Christian sects were reproduced, even to the length of young women sharing the bedrooms of their spiritual guides. All took Paul as their principal authority. J. H. Noyes, one of the best known and most representative of these teachers, laid down the main principles of his teachings thus:—

"When the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven, there will be no marriage. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a feast at which every dish is free to every guest. Exclusiveness, jealousy, quarrelling,

have no place there, for the same reason as that which forbids the guests at a thanksgiving dinner to claim each his separate dish, and quarrel with the rest for his rights. In a holy community there is no more reason why sexual intercourse should be restrained by law, than why eating and drinking should be; and there is as little occasion for shame in the one case as in the other.... The guests of the marriage supper may have each his favourite dish, each a dish of his own procuring, and that without the jealousy of exclusiveness. I call a certain woman my wife; she is yours; she is Christ's; and in Him she is the bride of all saints. She is dear in the hands of a stranger, and according to my promise to her I rejoice."*

In a letter to Mr. Hepworth Dixon, J. H. Noyes claims the "right of religious inspiration to shape society and dictate the form of family life," and with probable accuracy says that the origin of these American sects is to be found in revivals:—

"The philosophy of the matter seems to be this: Revivals are theocratic in their very nature; they introduce God into human affairs.... In the conservative theory of revivals, this power is restricted to the conversion of souls; but in actual experience it goes, or tends to go, into all the affairs of life.... Religious love is very near neighbour to sexual love, and they always get mixed in the intimacies and social excitements of revivals. The next thing a man wants, after he has found the salvation of his soul, is to find his Eve and his Paradise.... The course of things may be restated thus: Revivals lead to religious love; religious love excites the passions; the converts, finding them-

* *Spiritual Wives*, ii. pp. 55–6.

selves in theocratic liberty, begin to look about for their mates and their liberty."*

With regard to the beginnings of these modern movements of "Spiritual Wifehood," all involving the abrogation of the normal relations of the sexes, Hepworth Dixon writes:—

"It has not, I think, been noticed by any writer that three of the most singular movements in the churches of our generation seem to have been connected, more or less closely, with the state of mind produced by revivals; one in Germany, one in England, and one in the United States; movements which resulted, among other things, in the establishment of three singular societies—the congregation of Pietists, vulgarly called the Mucker, at Königsberg; the brotherhood of Princeites at Spaxton; and the Bible Communists at Oneida Creek. . . . They had these chief things in common: they began in colleges, they affected the form of family life, and they were carried on by clergymen; each movement in a place of learning and of theological study: that in Germany at the Luther-Kirch of Königsberg, that in England at St. David's College, that in the United States at Yale College. . . . These three divines, one Lutheran, one Anglican, one Congregational, began their work in perfect ignorance of each other. . . . Each movement was regarded by its votaries as the most perfect fruit of the revival spirit. In truth, the change which came upon the saints from their close experience of revival passion, was regarded by themselves as in some degree miraculous, equal in divine significance to a new creation of the world."†

* *Spiritual Wives*, pp. 176–7, 181.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 84–6.

For an almost exact replica of the erotic extravagances of some of the early Christian sects, one may turn to Russia. The difficulties and dangers of political life in Russia are doubtless responsible for having made religion such a power among the mass of the people, and this will also explain the diversion into religious channels of energy that under more favourable conditions is expended in social agitation and activity. Many of these sects are, of course, of a harmless character, mostly originating in an even greater love for the past and a more slavish adherence to ancient formulas than is displayed by the orthodox Church. Some, however, present the wildest excesses of sexual theory and practice. Nothing seems too wild or too extravagant to become the originating point of a new sect. Theories of marriage and sexual relations generally are developed with a logical fearlessness peculiarly Russian. Among the Bezpopovtsi, a numerous sect split up into several branches, opinions on marriage vary between regarding it as a mere conventional affair, and denouncing it as a hindrance to spiritual development. "Between these two extremes," says Mr. Heard, "there is room for the wildest and most repulsive theories. Carnal sensuality is allied in monstrous union with religious mysticism. Free love, independence of the sexes, possession of women in common, have been preached and practised. Debauchery, as an incidental weakness of human nature, has been advocated as the lesser evil; libertinism as preferable to concubinage, and the latter as better than marriage. One of their most austere teachers cynically declares that 'it is wiser to live with beasts than to be joined to a wife; to frequent

many women in secret, rather than to live with one openly.'"*

Another sect called 'Eunuchs' take their stand on Matt. xix. 12: "There are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." This sect believes in and practises emasculation as the surest way of attaining perfection. Man, they say, should be like the angels, without sex and without desire. This practice reminds one of an early Christian sect, the Valesians, which not only emasculated members of their own sect, but performed the same operation forcibly on those who fell into their hands.† The Khlysti, a sect which derives its name from the practice of flagellation, denounce marriage as unclean, and part of their religious ritual is, according to some writers, the worship of a naked woman. Baron Von Haxthausen, writing in 1856, gives the following description of their ceremonies on Easter night:—

"On this night the Khlysti all assemble for a great solemnity, the worship of the mother of God. A virgin, fifteen years of age, whom they have induced to act the part by tempting promises, is bound and placed in a tub of warm water; some old women come, and first make a large incision in the left breast, then cut it off, and staunch the blood in a wonderfully short time. During the operation a mystical picture of the Holy Spirit is put into the victim's hand, in order that

* *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent*, p. 201.

† Lea, *Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, p. 40.

she may be absorbed in regarding it. The breast which has been removed is laid upon a plate and cut into small pieces, which are eaten by all the members of the sect present; the girl in the tub is then raised upon an altar which stands near, and the whole con gregation dance wildly round it, singing at the same time. The jumping then grows madder and wilder, till the lights are suddenly extinguished and horrible orgies commence." *

The 'Jumpers,' an offshoot of the Khlysti, are much more pronounced in their sexual extravagances. They openly profess debauchery, for the usual reason, that of conquering the flesh by exhaustion and satiety. They meet usually by night, and after prayers are chanted and hymns sung, the leader commences a slow jumping movement, keeping time with a song. Then:—

"The audience, arranged in couples, engaged to each other in advance, imitate his example and join the strain; the bounds and the singing grow faster and louder as it spreads, until, at its height, the elder shouts that he hears the voices of angels; the lights are extinguished, the jumping ceases, and the scene that follows in the darkness defies description. Each one yields to his desires, born of inspiration, and therefore righteous, and to be gratified; all are brethren in Christ, all promptings of the inner spirit are holy; incest, even, is no sin. They repudiate marriage, and justify their abominations by the Biblical le-

* *Visit to the Russian Empire*, i. p. 254. Merejkowski, in his historical novel, *Peter and Alexis*, gives a more detailed account of the sexual ceremonies of this sect. See also Heard's description, *Russian Churches*, p. 258.

gends of Lot's daughters, Solomon's harem, and the like." *

There are many other curious sects in Russia, many of which bring us back to the religious atmosphere of the European dark ages. But without pursuing a description of these to any greater extent, enough has been said to show the persistence of the stream of sexualism in the history of Christianity. Of course, this feature did not enter religion with Christianity. On the contrary, I have shown that it was present from the earliest times. The association of religion with sexual phenomena does not commence as a sexual aberration; it only assumes that form at a comparatively late stage in religious history. The origin of the connection has to be found in that atmosphere of the supernatural which envelops primitive life, moulds primitive conceptions, and more or less fashions all primitive institutions. The sexual side of religious belief and religious symbolism only becomes abnormal, and even morbid, when the development of social life makes possible a truer view of sexuality. In this the great churches have, perhaps, unconsciously assisted Their position of social control has compelled them to set their faces against the sexual symbolism which is so closely associated with early religious history, while at the same time countenancing religious fervour in general. The consequence has been that small bodies of men and women, freed from the restraining influence of social responsibility, have developed to extravagant length certain phases of religious belief that have been generally discountenanced elsewhere. Their so doing certainly helps the present-day student

* *Russian Church and Russian Dissent*, p. 262.

to make a more complete survey of all the factors that have played their part in religious history than would otherwise have been possible. Repulsive as some of these features now are, they have helped in their time to nourish the general belief in a supernatural order, and so to strengthen the general idea to which they were affiliated.

FROM WHAT HAS BEEN ALREADY SAID, it should be clear that a complete understanding of religious phenomena—whether legitimately or wrongly so called—involves acquaintance with a number of factors that are not usually called religious. Man's religious beliefs are usually a very composite product; they are built up from a number of states of feeling and mental convictions, some of which have only an accidental connection with the religious idea itself. Unfortunately, the training given to professional religious teachers rarely equips them for dealing with religion from the scientific point of view. Their training gives them a knowledge of several ancient languages, makes them acquainted with the rise and fall of certain doctrines, the nature of Church ritual and the like, all of which, while interesting enough in themselves, give little more genuine enlightenment than a knowledge of the dates of English monarchs provides of the character of genuine historic processes. One writer pertinently asks:—

"What does the ordinary seminary graduate know of the histology, anatomy, and physiology of the soul? Absolutely nothing. He must stumble along through years of trying experience and look back over countless mistakes before he understands these things even in a general way. What does the ordinary graduate understand about doubt? It is all classed together, whether in adolescents or in hardened sinners, and one dose is applied. What does the graduate know about sexuality, so closely allied with certain forms of religious manifestations? What about ecstasy, in its various forms, the numerous methods of faith cure thrust upon an illiterate but credulous people,

or the significance or insignificance of visions and dreams?"*

It is, indeed, not too much to say that a theological training tends to prevent a rational comprehension of religion in both its normal and abnormal manifestations. Religious phenomena are not affiliated to phenomena as a whole; they are treated as quite distinct from the rest of life, possessing both an independent origin and justification. The consequence is that what are usually called studies of religion move round and round the same circle of ideas, and a revolution is mistaken for progress. Genuine enlightenment has come to us from men who have attacked the subject from a quite different point of view. They recognised that whether the religious idea was accepted as true or rejected as false, it could not be separated from that host of ideas and beliefs which make up the psychological side of the social structure. It was to be studied as a piece of natural history first of all. Whether it involved more than this they left to be settled later. It cannot be said that they belittled the *power* of religion; on the contrary, the investigations showed it to be one of the most potent of the forces that shape social institutions. But they demonstrated the absurdity of placing religion in a category of its own. As an objective fact, they showed that religion was subject to the same forces that determine the form of other objective facts. As a culture fact, they traced its connection with corresponding phases of social development; and as a psychological fact, they demonstrated its workings to be in harmony with workings of normal psychological

* Dr. G. B. Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, pp. 7–8.

laws. Five thousand years of theological study had left the world as ignorant of the nature of religious phenomena as it was in the days of ancient Chaldea. Fifty years of scientific study has served to make at least a broad path through what was hitherto an impenetrable jungle.

What has been said holds with peculiar force of the subject of conversion. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Christianity, for initiation and conversion accompanies religion in all its phases. I do not think that it is peculiar to religion even as a whole. A sudden discharge of feeling in a special direction leading to a changed attitude, more or less permanent towards life, may be seen in connection with the non-religious life, although it fails to receive the attention bestowed on changes that are connected with religion. But if conversion is not a peculiarly Christian phenomenon, one school of theologians, at least, has raised it to a position of peculiar eminence in connection with Christianity. They have taken it to be the mark of a person who has attained spiritual manhood, and have laid down elaborate rules for its achievement. Many theologians will agree that this has been almost wholly disastrous. On the one side, conversion has been dwelt upon as a cataclysmal epoch in a person's life, produced, negatively, by an act of self-surrender, and, positively, by a supernatural act of grace. This has had the effect of blinding people to the real nature of the process, and has led to certain evil consequences that must always accompany attempts at wholesale conversion. On the other hand, it has given rise to a class of professional evangelists who count their trophies in 'souls' as a Red Indian might count scalps, and who are ignorant

of nearly everything except the art of working upon the emotions of a crowd of more or less uncultured people. Here, for instance, is an account of an American evangelist and ex-prize fighter, and evidently a great favourite with certain sections of the religious public in America. The account is cited by Dr. Cutten from a local paper, Illinois :—

"5843 converts, 683 in a day. Total gift to Mr. Sunday, $10,431. Greatest revival in history. Will attract the attention of the religious world. Sermon on 'Booze,' the great effort of the revival! These are all headlines to the report of the meeting, which covers six columns—evidently a response to the interest shown in 'Billy' Sunday's meetings. The sermon on 'Booze' is given in full, and the physical exertions of the preacher described in detail. He began with his coat, vest, tie, and collar off. In a few moments his shirt and undershirt were gaping open to the waist, and the muscles of his neck and chest were seen working like those in the arm of a blacksmith, while perspiration poured from every pore. His clothing was soaked, as if a hose had been turned on him. He strained, and twisted, and reached up and down. Once he was on the floor for just a second, in the attitude of crawling, to show that all crime crawled out of the saloon; then he was on his feet as quickly as a cat could jump. At the end of forty-five minutes he mounted a chair, reached high, as he shouted, then again was on the floor, and dropped prostrate to illustrate a story of a drunken man, bounded to his feet again as if steel springs filled that lithe, slender, lightning-like body. He generally breaks a common kitchen chair in this sermon, and this came after a terrible effort, with eyes

flashing, face scowling, the picture of hate. He whirled the chair over his head, smashed the chair to the platform floor, whirled the shattered wreck in the air again, and threw it to the ground in front of the pulpit. In two minutes men from the front row were tearing the wreck to pieces and dividing it up—a round here, a leg there, a piece of the back to another, and so on. Later, men carried away in cheering could be seen in the audience waving those chair fragments in the air."

This is, of course, an extreme case, although it is but an exaggeration of methods in common use among these professional revivalists. The whole aim and purpose of these men is to arouse in the audience a high emotional tension, and any means is acceptable that succeeds in doing this. On the part of the congregation a large portion go for the express purpose of indulging in an emotional debauch. Many attend revival after revival, living over again the debauch of the last, and treasuring lively expectations of the next. Between these and the victim of alcohol tasting again his last 'burst,' and seeking opportunities for another, there is really little moral or psychological distinction. The social consequences of these engineered revivals have never been fully worked out, but when it is done by some competent person, the conclusions will be a revelation to many. One thing is certain: to expect really useful social results from such methods is verily to look to gather grapes from thistles.

During recent years the phenomena of religious conversion have been studied in a more scientific spirit.* Statistics have been compiled and analysed, the

*The most elaborate study of this character known to the present writer is Mr. G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*, in two vol-

frames of mind attendant on conversion arranged and studied, with the result that the salient features are to be discerned by all who approach the study of the subject with a little detachment of mind. One outstanding feature of this more scientific enquiry into the nature of conversion has been to demonstrate that it is almost exclusively a phenomenon of puberty and adolescence. Mr. Hall has compiled a lengthy list of the ages at which noted religious characters experienced what is known as conversion.* From this I take the following examples. Religious conviction came to St. Thekla at the age of 18, to St. Agnes at 13, St. Antony at 18, Martin of Tours at 18, Euphrasia at 12, Benedict at 14, Cuthbert at 15, St. Bernard at 12, St. Dominic at 15, St. Collette at 20, St. Catherine at 7, St. Teresa at 12, St. Francis of Sales at 11. In his *Life of Jesus*, Keim also remarks that although some of the disciples may have been married, most of them were probably about twenty years of age.†

Professor Starbuck, placing on one side both historical and anthropological aspects, set himself the task of examining cases of the present day. A paper was sent out asking various questions as to age, state of health, frame of mind, before, during, and following conversion. The questions were sent to male and fe-

umes. The bulk of the work is, however, terrifying to some, and the cost prohibitive to many. For the general reader of limited leisure and means, Professor Starbuck's smaller volume, *The Psychology of Religion*, presents the salient facts in a brief and satisfactory manner. It is lacking, however, on the anthropological side, a view that is well presented by Dr. Stanley Hall.

* See *Adolescence*, i. p. 528.

† Vol. iii. p. 279.

male members of different religious denominations. In reply, 1265 papers were filled up and returned. One result of a scrutiny of these returns was to show thatthe age at which religious conversion was experienced began as early as 7 or 8 years, it increased gradually till 10 or 11, then a more rapid increase till 18 or 20, a decline increasing in rapidity to the age of 25, and its practical disappearance beyond the age of 30. In girls, the period of conversion antedates that of boys by about two years.* Starbuck's conclusion is the perfectly valid one that conversion "belongs almost exclusively to the years between 10 and 25," and is distinctly a phenomenon of adolescence.

This conclusion would be borne out by a study of almost any revival crusade. Thus a few years ago—1904—England received a visit from the American evangelist, Dr. Torrey. At the conclusion of his visit, Sir Robertson Nicol invited opinions from ministers in the towns visited by Torrey, and published the replies in his paper, *The British Weekly*, on October 27. There was no attempt whatever to elicit the ages of the reported converts; the enquiry was directed to the point of ascertaining whether these engineered missions had a beneficial effect on church life, or the reverse. But incidentally the ages of the converts were given in some cases, and one may safely assume that in the reports where no age was mentioned the facts, if disclosed, would not run counter to the generalisation above given. The Rev. T. Towers, Birmingham, noted that 16 out of 25 reported converts were

* *Psychology of Religion*, chap. iii. Hall's figures are given in the second volume of his work, pp. 288–92.

children. Rev. A. Le Gros, Rugby, reported: "A number of our youngest members, especially amongst the young girls, were amongst those who professed conversion." Rev. H. Singleton, Smethwick, says: "The bulk of the names sent to me were those of children under thirteen years of age." Rev. W. G. Percival, Lozells Congregational Church, says of the 'inquiry' meeting held after the preaching: "The dear little things followed one another for inquiry until the place was a scene of utter confusion." Reports of a similar nature came from other places. The ages were pointed out quite incidentally; conversions of youths of 17 or 18 would not excite comment with these. Were the ages of all given, we should, without doubt, find them fall into line with Starbuck's and Hall's figures.

Professor James quite accepts this view of conversion. The conclusion, he says, "would seem to be the only sound one: conversion is in its essence a normal adolescent phenomenon, incidental to the passage from the child's small universe to the wider intellectual and spiritual life of maturity." * Conversion, in the sense of a change from "the child's small universe" to the large world of human society, may be a normal fact in life, but the really essential fact in the enquiry is not the fact of growth, but growth in a specific direction. Why should this normal change from childhood to maturity be the period during which *religious* conversion is experienced? This question is not only ignored by Professor James, it is made more confused by his method of stating it. Of course, if all people experienced this religious conviction, as all people undergo other changes at adolescence, the

* *Varieties*, p. 199.

question would be simplified. But this is obviously not the case. A large number of people never experience it so long as they are only brought into contact with ordinary social forces. Special circumstances seem usually to be required to rouse this sense of religious conviction. Nearly every story of conversion turns upon something unusual, unexpected, or dramatic occurring as the exciting cause. The question is, therefore, why should the line of growth, general with all at adolescence, be, in the case of some, diverted into religious channels? A study of the subject from this point of view will, I think, show that conversion is only normal in the sense that in an environment where religious influences are powerful each person is normally exposed to it. Those on whom the religious influence fails to operate experience the change from childhood to adolescence, on to complete maturity, without their nature evincing any lack of completeness. This is the vital truth of which Professor James loses sight, and it is ignored by the vast majority of writers who treat of the subject.

Leaving, for a while, the statistical view of conversion, we may turn to its other aspects. By the more advanced of religious teachers to-day the developments attendant on adolescence are taken as supplying no more than a favourable occasion for directing mind and emotion to definite religious conviction. Here the connection is admittedly more or less accidental. But by the great majority of theologians there is assumed a direct supernatural influence in the states of mind developed during adolescence. In more primitive times the connection is of a yet closer character. Puberty does not at this stage represent what a

modern would call an awakening of the religious consciousness, but a direct impingement of supernatural influence. From one point of view this conception still remains part of all religious systems, however overlaid it may be with modern ideas concerning sexual maturity. And we have, as a mere matter of historic fact, a whole series of customs commencing with the initiatory customs of savages and running right on to the modern practice of confirmation.

In a previous chapter it was pointed out what is the savage state of mind in relation to the beginnings of sex life as it is manifested in both boys and girls. Adolescence does not, to the primitive mind, serve as an occasion for the creation of an interest in the religious life, it is the sign of direct supernatural influence. One consequence of this is the rise of more or less elaborate ceremonials marking the initiation of youth into direct communion with the spiritual forces that govern tribal life.* Among the Polynesians tatooing forms part of the religious ceremony, and during the time the marks are healing the boy is taboo to the rest of the tribe, owing to his having been touched by the gods. With the North American Indians the following ceremony seems characteristic:—

"When a boy has attained the age of fourteen or fifteen years he absents himself from his father's lodge, lying on the ground in some remote or secluded spot, crying to the Great Spirit, and fasting the whole time. During this period of peril and abstinence, when he

* An elaborate list of these ceremonies in both the savage and civilised worlds has been compiled by Mr. Hall, ii. chap. xiii.

falls asleep, the first animal, bird, or reptile, of which he dreams, he considers the Great Spirit has designated for his mysterious protector through life."* Similar ceremonies are described by Livingstone as existing among the South African tribes. These customs are too widespread, and bear too great a similarity to be described with reference to many races. The variations are unimportant, and such as they are they may be studied in the pages of Hall, Frazer, and numerous other writers. With girls the measures adopted are of a more elaborate character than is the case with boys, because, for reasons already stated, the occurrence of puberty in girls gives the supernatural act a more startling and significant character. Hence the strict seclusion of girls almost universally practised among uncivilised peoples. The precautions taken indicate, as Hartland points out, that they are at this period not merely charged with a malign influence, but are peculiarly susceptible to the onset of powers other than human. And with a modification of language the same idea has persisted down to our time, even amongst those who would reject with indignation the statement that savage ideas concerning the nature of puberty form the real basis of their own mental attitude.

This truth cannot be too strongly emphasised. To ignore it is to miss the whole significance of continuity in human institutions and ideas. The ceremonies described do, of course, gather round the fact of sexual development, but they are not concerned with the sexual life, as such. It is sex as a supernatural manifestation that is the vital feature of the situation. The

* Catlin, *North American Indians*, i. p. 36; see also ii. p. 347.

governing idea is that puberty marks the direct association of the individual with a spiritual world to the influence of which the functional changes are due. As more accurate conceptions are formed, the older and inaccurate one is not altogether discarded. It has become incarnate in ceremonies, it is part of the traditional psychic life of the people, and the change is one of transformation rather than of eradication. In later cultural stages the physiological nature of the changes are seen, but they are expressed in terms of religion. Such expressions as "the soul's awareness of God," "the dawning consciousness of religion," etc., take the place of the earlier and more direct animistic interpretation. But the essential misinterpretation is retained, disguised from careless or uninformed people by the use of a modified terminology. But in substance the use made of puberty by organised religious forces remains the same throughout. We have the same absence of a rational explanation in both instances. In the one because the state of knowledge makes any other impossible; in the other because tradition, self-interest, and prejudice prevent its use. It is not only in his physical structure that man carries reminiscences of a lower form of life; such reminders are quite as plentiful in his mental life, and in social institutions.

Even with many who perceive the mechanism of conversion its real significance is often missed. For the important thing is, not that some people express the changes incident to adolescence in terms of religion, but that many do not, and also that these find complete satisfaction along lines of æsthetic, intellectual, or social interest. Yet one often finds it assumed

that the difference between the two classes is explained by assuming a certain lack of 'spiritual' development in the non-religious class. As stated, this is often perilously near to impertinence, and in any case is little better than the language of a charlatan. In the same way, the use of amatory phraseology is often treated as the intrusion of the sex element in a sphere in which it has no proper place. Enough has already been said to furnish good grounds for believing that there is much more than this in the phenomenon, and that one is justified in treating it as symptomatic of the operation of forces of the nature of which the subject is quite unaware. The only explanation of the facts already cited is that a misinterpretation of sexual states lies at the heart of the question. No other hypothesis covers the facts; no other hypothesis will explain why the larger number of people should find complete development in activities that lie outside the field of religion.

How easy it is to see the truth and distort it in the stating may be seen in the following passage:—

"Passing over the fact that the period of adolescence is noticeably a period of 'susceptibility,' we may take as an example of the intrusion or the persistence of the sexual elements in conditions of a non-sexual kind the frequent association of sexual with religious excitement. The appeal made during a religious revival to an unconverted person has psychologically some resemblance to the attempt of the male to overcome the hesitancy of the female. In each case the will has to be set aside, and strong suggestive means are used; and in both cases the appeal is not of the conflict type, but of an intimate, sympathetic, and

pleading kind. In the effort to make a moral adjustment, it consequently turns out that a technique is used which was derived originally from sexual life, and the use, so to speak, of the sexual machinery for a moral adjustment involves, in some cases, the carrying over into the general process of some sexual manifestations." *

The important questions, why religion should so powerfully appeal to people at adolescence, why its strength should reside so largely in the appeal to feelings associated with sexual development, and why conversion should be so rarely experienced when the period of sexual crisis is past, are quite ignored by Mr. Thomas. Yet it is precisely these questions that call most loudly for answers, and which, I believe, contain the key of the situation.

From many points of view adolescence is perhaps the most important epoch in the life of every individual. It is a time of great and significant organic growth, with the development of new organs and functions, and a corresponding transformation of both the emotional and intellectual output. So far as the brain, the most important organ of all, is concerned, one may safely say that before puberty its main function has been acquisition. After puberty vast tracts of brain tissue become active, and an era of rapid development sets in. There is a rapid growth of new nerve connections which occasions both physiological and psychological unrest.† An important point to bear in mind, also, is that all periods of rapid development involve

* W. I. Thomas, *Sex and Society*, pp. 115–6.

† For a good summary, see Donaldson's *Growth of the Brain*, pp. 21–48.

conditions of relative instability—one is, in fact, only the obverse side of the other. Dr. Mercier says that with girls "more or less decided manifestations of hysteria are the rule," and with both sexes this instability involves a peculiar susceptibility to suggestions and impressions. Accompanying the purely physical changes the mental and emotional nature undergoes what is little less than a transformation. There is less direct concern with self, and a more conscious concern with others. There is a craving for sympathy, for fellowship, a tendency to look at oneself from the outside, so to speak, a susceptibility to sights and sounds and impressions that formerly had little influence. Each one is conscious of new desires, new attractions, expressed often only in a vague feeling of unrest, with a desire, half shy because half conscious, for the company of the opposite sex. The childish desire for protection weakens; the more mature desire to protect others begins to express itself.

Now, the whole significance of these changes, physical and mental, is fundamentally sexual and social. Human life, it may be said, has a twofold aspect. As a mere animal organism, there is the perpetuation of the species, which nature secures by the mere force of the sex impulse. As a human being, he is part of a social structure, cell in the social tissue, to use Leslie Stephen's expressive phrase. And in this direction nature secures what is necessary by the presence of impulses and cravings as imperious as, and even more permanent than, those of mere sex. Of course, in practice these two things operate together. By a process of selection, the anti-social character is weeded out, and the two sets of feelings work together in harmony for

the furtherance and the development of the life of the species. The species is perpetuated in the interests of society; society is perpetuated in the interests of the species. Further, it is part of the natural 'plan' that there shall be developed impulses and capacities suitable to each phase of life as it emerges. Thus it has been shown that the lengthening of infancy—that is, the prolongation of the time during which the young human being is dependent upon its parents for support and protection—is nature's method of developing to a greater degree the capacity of the human animal for more complex adjustment. Instead of being launched on the world with a number of instincts practically fully developed, and so capable of attending to its own needs almost as soon as born, man is born with few instincts, and a great capacity for education enabling him to adjust his conduct to the demands of an environment constantly increasing in complexity. In the same way it has been shown that the instinct for play, practically universal throughout the whole of the animal world, is nature's method of preparing the young for the more serious business of nature.* It is, therefore, only in line with what is found to be true elsewhere that the changes incident to puberty should receive their rational interpretation in the necessities of social life. That these necessities should be met largely by the play of unreasoning impulse is, again, quite in line with what occurs in other directions. The insistent pressure of social life for thousands of generations secures the emergence of needs of the true nature of which the individual may be ignorant. In no other

* See on this subject the two fine works by Karl Groos, *The Play of Animals*, *The Play of Man*.

way, in fact, could the persistence of the species and of human society be secured.

The whole significance, then, of puberty and adolescence is the entry of the individual into the larger life of the race. It is, too, a statement beyond reasonable dispute that if we eliminate religion altogether from the environment there is not a single feeling experienced at adolescence, not a single intellectual craving, that would not undergo full development and receive complete satisfaction. The proof of the truth of this is that it occurs in a large number of cases. Sacrifice, the craving for the ideal, with every other feeling associated by many with religion, exist in connection with non-religious phases of life. It is idle to argue that some people have a craving for religion, and nothing but religion will satisfy them. Where an individual is in complete ignorance of the nature and significance of his own development, and those around him no better informed; where, moreover, there are others in a position of authority ready with a special interpretation, it is not surprising if the religious explanation is accepted as the genuine and only one. But in reality a sound judgment is formed, not on the basis of what some declare they cannot do without, but on the basis of what others actually do without, and suffer no observable loss in consequence. We do not estimate the value of alcohol on the basis of those who declare they cannot do without it. The true test is found in those who abstain from its use. So, also, in the case of religion. That some, even the majority, declare that religious belief is essential to their welfare, proves little or nothing. Human nature being what it is, and the history of society being what it is, it would be surpris-

ing were it otherwise. There is much greater significance in so large a number of people finding complete satisfaction in purely secular activities.

After what has been said of the misinterpretation of mental and emotional states in terms of religious belief, it is not surprising to find a writer, a clergyman, and one with experience of growing boys, express himself as follows:—

"My experience confirms the opinion of the psychologists that most boys of the public school age have a strongly mystical tendency. This is to be expected, on account of the great emotional development of that period of life. But it is obscured by the fact that the boy is both unwilling and unable to give any verbal expression to this tendency. He is unwilling because it is something very new and curious in his experience; he is often a little frightened of it, and he is exceedingly frightened of other people's contempt for it. And he is unable, because the words he is accustomed to use are valueless in this connection, and he feels priggish if he tries to use others.... But, though unexplained, the mystical tendency is there, and should be appealed to and developed."*

Now, clearly, all that can be reasonably meant by saying that a boy of, apparently, from 12 to 16 has a mystical tendency, is that the physiological changes incident to puberty are accompanied by a mass of feeling of a vague and formless character. Naturally, his boyish experience is unable to furnish him with the means of giving adequate expression to his feelings. That can only come with the experience of maturity. And with equal inevitability he is at the mercy

* W. Temple, *Repton School Sermons.*

of the explanation furnished him by those whom he regards as his teachers and guides. When he is told that this element of 'mysticism' is the awakening of religion in his soul, he accepts the explanation precisely as he accepts explanations of other things. That this 'mystical tendency' should be appealed to and developed is a statement open to very great doubt. It should rather be explained, not perhaps in a brutally frank manner, but in a way that would lead the boy to see himself as an organic part of society, with definite duties and obligations. If this were done, adolescence might provide us with the raw material for a much greater number of useful and intelligent citizens than it does at present. The true nature of the process, so elaborately misunderstood by Dr. Temple, is clearly outlined by Dr. Mercier:—

"In connection with normal development, a large body of vague and formless feeling arises, and, until experience gives it shape, the possessor remains ignorant of the source and nature of the feeling. If the circumstances are appropriate for the natural outlet and expression of the activities, they are expressed in affection, and are a source of health and strength to the possessor. But if no such outlet exists, the vague, voluminous, formless feelings are referred to an occasion that is vague, voluminous, and wanting in definite form, they are ascribed to the direct influence of the Deity, and assume a place in religious emotion."*

Leaving this aspect of the subject for a time, let us look more closely at the process of conversion. It has already been pointed out that one great feature of adolescence is susceptibility to impressions and sugges-

* *Sanity and Insanity*, p. 281.

tions. One is not surprised to find, therefore, that in Starbuck's collection of cases 34 per cent. of the females and 29 per cent. of the males described their conversion as being directly due to imitation, social pressure, and example. If we were to add to these the cases where unconscious imitation and suggestion is at work, the proportion would be much greater. Religion, like dress, has its modes, and imitation will occur in the one direction as readily as in the other. Nothing is more striking in the records of conversion than the monotony of the language used to describe the feelings experienced. It is exactly as though the converts had been learning a regular catechism, as in a way they have been. Young boys and girls will confess their sinful state in language identical with that used by one who has actually lived a career of vice and crime. Others of an aggressively commonplace character will use the language of exalted mysticism suitable to an Augustine or a Jacob Boehme. In these cases we have not identity of feeling finding expression in identity of language; it is pure imitation and suggestion without the least regard to the fitness of the language employed.

The full power of suggestion would be more fitly considered in connection with waves of religious feeling that have assumed an epidemic form; but it will not be out of place here to call attention to this factor in such a recent case as the outbreaks in Wales under the leadership of persons such as Evan Roberts. Quite apart from the suggestion and imitation operating in the gatherings themselves, it is plain that many went to the meetings quite prepared to act in accordance with what had gone before. Newspapers had publish-

ed elaborate reports of the 'scenes,' certain manifestations were recognised as signs of the "workings of the Spirit," with the result that all these operated as powerful suggestions, particularly with those of a hysterical disposition. And behind this particular revival there were the traditions of other revivals, all of which had created a heritage as coercive as any purely social tradition. A crowd of people in a state of eager expectancy, exposed to the assaults of a preacher skilled in rousing their emotion to fever pitch, is naturally ready to see and hear things that none would see and hear in their normal moments. No better field for the study of crowd psychology, particularly at the point at which it merges into the abnormal, could be imagined than the ordinary revival.

In America these revival outbreaks seem to assume a much more extravagant form than with us. Mr. Stanley Hall, for example, thus describes a Kentucky camp meeting in which the prevailing form of spiritual manifestation was that of 'jerking.' Quoting from an eye-witness, he says:—

"The crowd swarmed all night round the preacher, singing, shouting, laughing, some plunging wildly over stumps and benches into the forest, shouting 'Lost, lost!' others leaping and bounding about like live fish out of water; others rolling over and over on the ground for hours; others lying on the ground and talking when they could not move; and yet others beating the ground with their heels. As the excitement increased, it grew more morbid and took the form of 'jerkings,' or in others the holy laugh. The jerks began with the head, which was thrown violently from side to side so rapidly that the features were blurred

and the hair almost seemed to snap, and when the sufferer struck an obstacle and fell he would bounce about like a ball. Saplings were sometimes cut breast high for the people to jerk by. In one place the earth about the roots of one of them was kicked about as though by the feet of a horse stamping flies. One sufferer mounted his horse to ride away when the jerks threw him to the earth, whence he rose a Christian. A lad, who feigned illness to stay away, was dragged there by the spirit and his head dashed against the wall till he had to pray. A sceptic who cursed and swore was crushed by a falling tree. Men fancied themselves dogs, and gathered round a tree barking and 'treeing the devil.' They saw visions and dreamed dreams, and as the revival waned, it left a crop of nervous and hysterical disorders in its wake." *

We have nothing quite so extreme as this in British revivals, but the home phenomena are not substantially different in nature. A medical observer of some of the earliest Methodist revivals thus describes the symptoms of those who were subject to 'divine' seizures under the influence of Wesley and his immediate followers:—

"There came on first a feeling of faintness, with rigor and a sense of weight at the pit of the stomach; soon after which the patient cried out as though in the agonies of labour. The convulsions then began, first showing themselves in the muscles of the eyelids, though the eyes themselves were fixed and staring. The most frightful contortions of the countenance followed, and the convulsions now took their course downwards, so that the muscles of the trunk and neck

* *Adolescence*, ii. pp. 286–7.

were affected, causing a sobbing respiration, which was performed with great effort. Tremors and agitations ensued, and the patients screamed out violently, and tossed their heads from side to side. As the complaint increased, it seized the arms, and its victims beat their breasts, clasped their hands, and made all sorts of strange noises."

To the non-medical religious observer the scenes produced a different impression, thus:—

"When the power of religion began to be spoken of, the presence of God really filled the place... The greatest number of them who cried or fell were men; but some women and several children felt the power of the same Almighty Spirit, and seemed just sinking into hell. This occasioned a mixture of sounds, some shrieking, some roaring aloud. The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life; and, indeed, almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish.... I stood on a pew seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew, an able-bodied, fresh, healthy countryman; but in a moment, while he seemed to think of nothing less, down he dropt with a violence inconceivable. The adjoining pews seemed shook with his fall. I heard afterwards the stamping of his feet ready to break the boards as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew.... Among the children who felt the arrows of the Almighty, I saw a sturdy boy, about eight years old, who roared above his fellows, and seemed, in his agony, to struggle with the strength of a grown man. His face was red as scarlet; and almost all on whom God laid His hand turned either very red or almost black."*

* Southey's *Life of Wesley*, chap. xxiv.

In other instances connected with the same movement, a girl is described as "lying on the floor as one dead." One woman "tore up the ground with her hands, filling them with dust and with the hard-trodden grass"; another "roared and screamed in dreadful agony." A child, seven years old, "saw visions, and astonished the neighbours with her awful manner of relating them." John Wesley personally interviewed a number of the people seized in this manner, and was quite convinced of the supernatural nature of the attacks. He said that he had "generally observed more or less of these outward symptoms to attend the beginning of a general work of God," although he admitted that in some cases "Satan mimicked God's work in order to discredit the whole work." But whether of God or Satan there was no question of their supernatural character. Moreover, whatever may be one's opinion of these outbreaks, there is one fact that stands out clear and indisputable. This is that the Methodist revival owed a great deal of its vitality—as is also the case with other religious movements—to phenomena of a distinctly pathologic nature. Subtract from these movements all phenomena of the class indicated, and such phrases as 'the revival fire' become meaningless. Right through history religious conviction has been gained in innumerable cases by the operation of factors that a more accurate knowledge finds can be explained without any reference whatever to supernatural forces.

Lest the above examples be dismissed as belonging to an old order of things, I subjoin the following account—from a missionary—of a recent revival scene in India:—

"There were people ... on the floor fairly writhing over the realisation of sin as it came over them.... Saturday we were favoured with a wonderful manifestation of the Spirit. One of the older girls, who had had a remarkable experience, went into a trance, with her head thrown back, her arms folded, and motionless, except for a slight movement of her foot. She seemed to be seeing something wonderful, for she would marvel at it, and then laugh excitedly.... One girl rushed to the back of the vestibule and, lying across a bench, with her head and hands against the wall, she fairly writhed in agony for two hours before peace came to her."*

I do not know on what grounds we are justified in calling civilised people who chronicle these outbreaks as "a wonderful manifestation of the Spirit." Civilised in other respects, in relation to other matters, they may be. Civilised in relation to this particular matter they certainly are not. Their viewpoint is precisely that of the lowest tribe of savages. Savages, indeed, could not do more; our 'civilised' missionaries do no less. Tylor well says that "such descriptions carry us far back in the history of the human mind, showing modern men still in ignorant sincerity producing the very fits and swoons to which for untold ages savage tribes have given religious import. These manifestations in modern Europe indeed form part of a revival of religion, the religion of mental disease."†

The truth is that the appeals usually made to induce conversion, and the methods adopted, tend to develop a morbid state of mind, which very easily

* From *The Examiner* of September 6, 1906, cited by Cutten, p. 185. † *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 422.

passes into the pathological. A too insistent habit of introspection is always dangerous, and the danger is heightened when it takes the form of religious brooding. In Dr. Starbuck's collection of cases, seventy-five per cent. of the males and sixty per cent. of the females confessed to feelings of depression, anxiety, and sadness before conversion. This may be attributed partly to the harping upon a conviction of sinfulness, which in itself is wholly of an unhealthy character. It does not indicate moral health, and it is very far from indicating physiological health. The following confessions are pertinent, and will illustrate both points. I give in brackets the ages of the subjects where stated:—

"I felt the wrath of God resting on me. I called on Him for aid, and felt my sins forgiven" (13).

"I couldn't eat, and would lie awake all night."

"Often, very often, I cried myself to sleep" (19).

"Hymns would sound in my ears as if sung" (10).

"I had visions of Christ saying to me, Come to Me, My child" (15).

"Just before conversion I was walking along a pathway, thinking of religious matters, when suddenly the word H-e-l-l was spelled out five yards ahead of me" (17).

"I felt a touch of the Divine One, and a voice said 'Thy sins are forgiven thee; arise and go in peace'" (12).

"The thoughts of my condition were terrible" (13).

"For three months it seemed as if God's Spirit had withdrawn from me. Fear took hold of me. For a week I was on the border of despair" (16).

"A sense of sinfulness and estrangement from God grew daily" (15).

"Everything went wrong with me; it felt like Sunday all the time" (12).

"I felt that something terrible was going to happen" (14).

"I fell on my face by a bench and tried to pray. Every time I would call on God something like a man's hand would strangle me by choking. I thought I would surely die if I could not get help. I made one final effort to call on God for mercy if I did strangle and die, and the last I remember at that time was falling back on the ground with that unseen hand on my throat. When I came to myself there was a crowd around praising God."

A crowd around praising God! For all substantial purposes this last might be the description of a state of affairs in Central Africa instead of an occurrence in a country that claims to be civilised. It is not surprising that so great an authority as Sir T. S. Clouston gives an emphatic warning against revival services and unusual religious meetings, which should "on no account be attended by persons with weak heads, excitable dispositions, and neurotic constitutions."* Unfortunately it is precisely these classes for whom they possess the greatest attractions, and from whom the larger number of chronicled cases are drawn. The excitement of the revival meeting is as fatal an attraction to them as the dram is to the confirmed alcoholist; and if the ill-consequences are neither so immediately discernible nor as repulsive in character, they are none the less present in a large number of cases. The emotional strain to which the organism is subjected occurs, as the ages of the converts show, precisely at

* *Clinical Lectures*, p. 39.

the time when it is least able to bear it safely. The main characteristic of adolescence is instability, physical, emotional, and intellectual. It is a time of stress and strain, of the formation of new feelings and associations and desires that crave for expression and gratification. The instability of the organic conditions is evidenced by the large proportion of nervous disorders that occur during adolescence. Adolescent insanity is a well-known form of mania, although it is usually of brief duration. Sir T. S. Clouston, in his *Neuroses of Development*, gives a long list of complaints attendant on adolescence, and Sir W. R. Gowers, dealing with 1450 cases of epilepsy, points out that "three-quarters of the cases of epilepsy begin under twenty years, and nearly half (46 per cent.) between ten and twenty, the maximum being at fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen." Of hysteria, the same writer points out that of the total cases 50 per cent. occurs from ten to twenty years of age, 20 per cent. from twenty to thirty, and only 10 per cent. from thirty to forty.*

The peculiar danger, then, of the modern appeal for conversion is that it is couched in a form likely to do the minimum of good and the maximum of harm. Where religion exists as a normally operative factor of the environment—as in lower stages of culture—the danger is avoided, because no special machinery is required to bring about religious conviction. The general social life secures this. But at a later stage, when the religious and secular aspects of life become separated, with a growing preponderance of the latter, religion must be, as it were, specially and forcibly

* *Manual of Diseases of the Nervous System*, 1893, pp. 732 and 785.

introduced. Whether for good or ill, it is a disturbing force. It strives to divert the developing organic energies into a new channel. To effect this, it plays upon the emotions to an altogether dangerous extent, in complete ignorance of the nature of the passions excited. In the older form of the religious appeal, that in which fear was the chief emotion aroused, it is now generally conceded that the consequences were wholly bad. But under any form the emotional appeal is fraught with danger, since the tendency is for it to bring out unsuspected weaknesses in other directions. Sir W. R. Gowers wisely points out that "mental emotion—fright, excitement, anxiety—is the most potent cause of epilepsy," which is accounted for by bearing in mind "the profoundly disturbing effect of alarm on the nervous system, deranging as it does almost every function of the nervous system." Persons with predispositions to nervous disorders may pass with safety through the period of adolescence so long as their circumstances provide opportunities for healthy occupation with no undue emotional strain. But let the former be lacking, and the latter danger is always present. The hidden weakness develops, and injury more or less permanent follows. There is hardly a qualified medical authority in the country who would deny the truth of what has been said, although many do not care to speak out in relation to religious matters. But all would doubtless agree with Dr. Mercier that "every revival is attended by its crop of cases of insanity, which are the more numerous as the revival is more fervent and long continued."*

Something must be said on the moral character of

* *Sanity and Insanity*, p. 282.

conversions in general. This is, naturally, greatly exaggerated, often deliberately so. In the first place, confessions of 'sinfulness' in a pre-conversion state, when made by youths of both sexes, may be dismissed as quite worthless. They are merely using the language placed in their mouths by professional evangelists, and the similarity of the confessions carry their own condemnation. Leading a sinful, or even a vicious life, usually means no more than visiting a theatre, or a music hall, or playing cards, or non-attendance at church, or not troubling about religious doctrines. Very often the vague feeling of restlessness incident to adolescence is interpreted as due to sin or estrangement from God, and after conversion the convert is, for purposes of self-glorification, given to magnify the benefits and comforts derived from his religious convictions. The magnitude of the change increases the value of the convert, and with well-known characters there has been as great an exaggeration of vices before conversion as of virtues subsequently. The way in which evangelical Christianity has created a life of the wildest dissipation for the earlier years of John Bunyan is an instructive instance of this procedure.

So far as older converts are concerned, everyone of balanced judgment will regard stories of conversion from extreme vice to extreme virtue with the greatest suspicion. Character does not change suddenly, although there may be cases of 'sports' in the moral world as elsewhere. Where some modification of conduct, but hardly of character, results, the machinery is very obvious, and does not in the least necessitate an appeal to the intrusion of a supernatural influence for an explanation. The religious gathering opens—

as any non-religious meeting may open—a new circle of associates with different ideals and standards of value. So long as the newcomer is desirous of retaining the respect of his fresh associates, so long he will try to act as they act and think as they think. There will be a change of conduct, but not, as I have said, of character. Those who look closely will find the same character still active. The mean character remains mean, the untruthful one remains untruthful. The only difference is that these qualities will be expressed in a different form. Moreover, the same thing may be seen occurring quite apart from religion. Every association of men and women exerts precisely the same influence. In the army, a regiment that has a reputation for steadiness and sobriety develops these qualities in all who enter it. Regiments with a reputation for opposite qualities do not fail to convert newcomers. A workshop, a club, a profession, exerts a precisely similar influence. One man finds inspiration in the Bible and another in the Newgate Calendar. A man will usually be guided by the ideals of his associates, whether these ideals be those of a thieves' kitchen or of a philanthropic institution. This only means that each individual is subject to the influence of the group spirit. For good and evil this is one of the deepest and most pregnant facts of human nature. The utilisation and distortion of this fact in the interests of religious organisations has served to prevent its general recognition and the wise use of it by the community at large.

Finally, it has to be borne in mind, in view of the data given above, that conversion is experienced by the individual at that period of life when the more social side of human nature is beginning to find ex-

pression. In this way the natural growth from the small world of childhood to the larger world of adult humanity is taken advantage of by religion, and the process of inevitable growth is attributed to the influence of religious belief. In itself the phenomenon is in no degree religious, but wholly social. The process is well enough described by Starbuck in the following passage—although there are certain quite unnecessary theological implications:—

"Conversion is the surrender of the personal will to be guided by the larger forces of which it is a part. These two aspects are often mingled. In both there is much in common. There is a sudden revelation and recognition of a higher order than that of the personal will. The sympathies follow the direction of the new insight, and the convert transfers the centre of life and activity from the part to the whole. With new insight comes new beauty. Beauty and worth awaken love—love for parents, kindred, kind, society, cosmic order, truth, and spiritual life. The individual learns to transfer himself from a centre of self-activity into an organ of revelation of universal being, and to live a life of affection for and oneness with the larger life outside. As a necessary condition of the spiritual awakening is the birth of fresh activity and of a larger self-consciousness, which often assert themselves as the dominant element in consciousness."*

Adolescence is the golden period of life, because it is the age in which the formative influences effect their strongest and most permanent impressions. But this susceptibility, while pregnant with promise, is because of this susceptibility likewise fraught with the poss-

* *Psychology of Religion*, pp. 146–7.

ibilities of danger. The developing qualities of mind need to be wisely and carefully guided; and it is little short of criminal that at this critical juncture so many young people should be handed over to the ignorant ministrations of professional evangelism. The true sociological significance of the development is ignored, and it is small wonder that, having wasted this impressionable period, so many people should go through life with a quite rudimentary sense of social responsibility and duty. An American author, speaking of the connection between certain brutal manifestations in social life in the United States and religious teaching, says:—

"It is well known that lynching in the South is carried on largely by the ignorant and baser elements of the white population. It is also well known that the chief method of religious influence and training of the black man and the ignorant white man is impulsive and emotional revivalism. It is a highly dangerous situation, and deserves the earnest consideration of the ecclesiastical statesmen of all denominations which work in the South. It will be impossible to protect that part of the nation, or any other, from the epidemic madness of the lynching mob if the seeds of it are sown in the sacred soil of religion.... Their preachers are great 'soul-savers,' but they lack the practical sense to build up their emotionalised converts into anything that approaches a higher life."*

The truth of this passage has a very wide implication. It is not alone true that so long as the lower kind of revivalism is encouraged, we are unconsciously perpetuating certain very ugly manifestations of

* *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals.*

social life; it is also true that while we give a supernaturalistic interpretation of phenomena that are wholly physiological and sociological in character, we can never make the most of the human material we possess. On the one side we have a deplorable encouragement of unhealthy emotionalism, and on the other a sheer misdirection and misuse of human faculty. The increase of self-consciousness, the craving for sympathy and communion with one's fellows, the impulse to service in the common life of the State, have no genuine connection with religion, although all these qualities are classified as religious, and are utilised by religious organisations. Actually and fundamentally they belong to the social side of human nature. As our hands are developed for grasping, and the various organs of the body for their respective functions, so mental and emotional qualities are developed in their due course for a rational social life. Biologically and psychologically, male and female are at adolescence entering into a deeper and more enduring relationship with the life of the race. There is no other meaning to the process.

Naturally enough, the vast majority of people express their developing nature in accordance with the fashion of their environment. If this environmental influence were rationally non-religious, the language would be that of a non-religious philosophy. As, however, supernaturalism, in some form or other, is still a potent force we have a contrary result. It is only here and there that one is found with the inclination or the wit to analyse his or her impulses, and few possess enough knowledge to make the analysis profitable. There is no wonder that concerning many of the most

important phenomena of human life we are still little above the level of the fetish worshipper. We may have a more elaborate phraseology, but the old ideas are still operative. The consequence is that each newcomer finds certain ideas and forms of speech ready for his acceptance, and is handed over, bound hand and foot, to influences that are the least capable of sane direction. We do not merely sacrifice our first-born; we immolate the whole of our progeny. The ignorant past plays into the hands of the designing present; the present conspires with the past to rob the future of the good that might result from the growth of a wiser and a better race.

Were society really enlightened and genuinely civilised, the truth of what has been said would be recognised as soon as stated. It would, indeed, be unnecessary to labour what would then be a generally recognised truth. But the mass of the people are not genuinely enlightened, our civilisation is largely a veneer, and numerous agencies prevent our reaping the full benefit of our available knowledge. Thus it happens that in place of an explanation of human qualities in terms of biologic and social evolution, we find current an explanation that is based upon pre-scientific ideas. Because our less instructed ancestors accounted for various manifestations of human qualities as due to a supernatural influence, we continue to perpetuate the delusion. We teach youth to express itself in terms of supernaturalism, and then treat the language and the fact as inseparable. In this respect, sociology is passing through a phase from which some of the sciences have finally emerged. In physics and astronomy, for instance, the fact has been separated from the su-

pernatural explanation, and shown to be independent of it. An exploitation of social life in the interests of supernaturalism is still in active operation. It is this that is really the central truth of the situation. And in ignoring this truth we expose a growing generation to the worst possible of educative influences, at a time when a wiser control would be preparing it for an intelligent participation in the serious and enduring work of social organisation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RELIGIOUS EPIDEMICS

UNDER PRESSURE OF SCIENTIFIC ANalysis the old distinction between the individual and society bids fair to break down, or to maintain itself as no more than a convenience of classification. It is now being recognised that a society is something more than a mere aggregate of self-contained units, and that the individual is quite inexplicable apart from the social group. It is the latter which gives the former his individuality. His earliest impressions are derived from the life of the group, and as he grows so he comes more and more under the influence of social forces. The consequence is that the key to a very large part of the phenomena of human nature is to be found in a study of group life. We may abstract the individual for purposes of examination, much as a physiologist may study the heart or the liver apart from the body from which it has been taken. But ultimately it is in relation to the whole that the true significance and value of the part is to be discerned.

In this corporate life imitation and suggestion play a powerful part. With children, by far the larger part of their education consists of sheer imitation, nor do adults ever develop beyond its influence. Suggestion is a factor that is more operative in youth and maturity than in early childhood, and is exhibited in a thousand and one subtle and unexpected ways. Both these forces are essential to an orderly, and to a progressive, social life; but they may just as easily become the cause of movements that are retrogressive, and even anti-social in character. An epidemic of suicide or of murder is as easily initiated as an epidemic of philanthropy. Let a person commit suicide in a strik-

ing and unusual manner, and there will soon be others following his example. Given a favourable environment, there is no idea, however unreal, that will not find advocates; no example, however strange or disgusting, that will not find imitators. The more uniform the society, the more powerful the suggestion, the easier the imitation. That is why a crowd, acting as a crowd, is nearly always made up of people drawn from the same social stratum, each unit already familiar with certain ideals and belief. Under such conditions a crowd will assume all the characteristics of a psychological entity. As Gustave Le Bon has pointed out, a crowd will do collectively what none of its constituent units would ever dream of doing singly.* It becomes capable of deeds of heroism or of savage cruelty. It will sacrifice itself or others with indifference. Above all, the mere fact of moving in a mass gives the individual a sense of power, a certainty of being in the right that he can—save under exceptional circumstances—never acquire while alone. The intellect is subdued, inhibition is inoperative, the instincts are given free play, and their movement is determined in turn by suggestions not unlike those with which a trained hypnotist influences his subject.

In the phenomena of contagion words and symbols play a powerful part. They are both a rallying-point and an outlet for the emotions of a crowd. These words or symbols may be wholly incongruous with the real needs of a people, but provided they are sufficiently familiar they will serve their purpose. And the more primitive the type of mind represented by the mass of the people the more powerfully these sym-

* See *The Psychology of Peoples* and *The Crowd.*

bols operate. Shakespeare's portrayal of the crowd in *Julius Cæsar* remains eternally true. The skilled orator, playing on old feelings, using familiar terms, and invoking familiar ideas, finds a crowd quite plastic to his hands. It is for these reasons that there is so keen a struggle with political and social parties for a monopoly of good rallying cries, and a readiness to fix objectionable titles on their opponents. Patriotism, Little Englander, Jingo, The Church in Danger, Godless Education, etc. etc. Causes are materially helped or injured by these means. There is little or no consideration given to their justice or reasonableness; it is the image aroused that does the work.

Psychological epidemics may in some cases be justly called normal in character. That is, they depend upon factors that are always in operation and which form a part of every social structure. A war fever or a commercial panic falls under this head. In other instances they depend upon abnormal conditions, upon the workings, perhaps, of some obscure nervous disease, and are of a pathological description. In yet other cases they represent a mixture of both. In such cases, for example, as that of the Medieval Flagellants or of the Dancing Mania, the presence of pathological elements is unmistakable. But neither of these epidemics could have occurred without a certain social preparation, and unless they had called into operation those principles of crowd psychology to which science has within recent years turned its attention, and which are normal factors in every society. These three classes of epidemics may be found in connection with subjects other than religious, but I am at present concerned with them only in that relation, and to point out that,

in spite of their undesirable or admittedly pathologic character, they have yet served to keep supernaturalism alive and active.

During the Christian period of European history by far the most important of all epidemics, as it was indeed the earliest, was monasticism. This takes front rank because of its extent, the degree to which it prepared the ground for subsequent outbreaks, and because of its indirect, and, I think, too little noticed, social consequences. It may safely be said that no other movement has so powerfully affected European society as has the monasticism of the early Christian centuries. It cannot, of course, be urged that Christianity originated monasticism. India and Egypt had its ascetic practices and celibate priesthood long before the birth of Christianity, and indeed gave Christianity the pattern from which to work. But the main stream of social life remained unaffected to any considerable extent by this asceticism. The social and domestic virtues received full recognition from the upholders of the monastic life, and there is no evidence that asceticism ever assumed an epidemic form. It has often been the lot of the Christian Church to give a more intense expression to religious tendencies already existing, and this was so in the case before us. At any rate, it was left for the Christian Church to give to monasticism the character of an epidemic, to treat the purely social and domestic virtues as a positive hindrance to the religious life, seriously to disturb national well-being, and to come perilously near destroying civilisation.

The origin of ascetic practices has already been indicated in a previous chapter. It has there been

pointed out that the deliberate torture of mind and body arose from the belief that the induced states brought man into direct communion with supernatural powers, and that this element has continued in almost every religion in the world. Says Baring-Gould:—

"The ascetic instinct is intimately united with the religious instinct. There is scarcely a religion of ancient and modern times, certain forms of Protestantism excepted, that does not recognise asceticism as an element in its system.... Brahminism has its order of ascetics.... Mohammedanism has its fakirs, subduing the flesh by their austerities, and developing the spirit by their contemplation and prayers. Fasting and self-denial were observances required of the Greeks, who desired initiation into the mysteries.... The scourge was used before the altars of Artemis and over the tomb of Pelops. The Egyptian priests passed their novitiate in the deserts, and when not engaged in their religious functions were supposed to spend their time in caves. They renounced all commerce with the world, and lived in contemplation, temperance, and frugality, and in absolute poverty.... The Peruvians were required to fast before sacrificing to the gods, and to bind themselves by vows of chastity and abstinence from nourishing food.... There were ascetic orders for old men and nunneries for widows among the Totomacs, monastic orders among Toltecs dedicated to the service of Quetzalcoatl, and others among the Aztecs consecrated to Tezcatlipoca.*

It was argued by Bingham, a learned eighteenth-century ecclesiastical historian, that although ascetic-

* *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, i. pp. 343–8.

ism was known and practised in individual cases from the earliest period of Christian history, it did not establish itself within the Church until the fourth century. It is not a matter of great consequence to the subject under discussion whether this be so or not. It is at least certain that Christian teaching contained within itself all the elements for such a development, which was bound, sooner or later, to transpire. The antithesis between the flesh and the spirit, the conception of the world as given over to Satan, the ascetic teaching of Paul, with the value placed upon suffering and privation as spiritually disciplinary forces, could not but create in a society permeated with a special type of supernaturalism, that asceticism which became so marked a feature of medieval Christianity. And it is certain also that in no other instance has asceticism proved itself so grave a danger to social order and security. Allowing for what Lecky calls the 'glaring mendacity' of the lives of the saints, a description that applies more or less to all the ecclesiastical writings of the early centuries, it is evident that the number of monks, their ferocity, and general practices, were enough to constitute a grave social danger. It is said that St. Pachomius had 7000 monks under his direct rule; that in the time of Jerome 50,000 monks gathered together at the Easter festival; that one Egyptian city mustered 20,000 nuns and 10,000 monks, and that the monastic population of Egypt at one time equalled in number the rest of the inhabitants. At a later date, within fifty years of its institution, the Franciscan Order possessed 8000 houses, with 200,000 members. In the twelfth century the Cluniacs had 2000 monasteries in France. In England, as late as 1546, Hooper,

afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, declared that there were no less than 10,000 nuns in England. Every country in Europe possessed a larger or smaller army of men and women whose ideals were in direct conflict with nearly all that makes for a sane and progressive civilisation.

The general character of the monk during the full swing of the ascetic epidemic has been well sketched by Lecky. His summary here will save a more extended exposition:—

"There is perhaps no phase in the moral history of mankind of a deeper and more painful interest than this ascetic epidemic. A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato. For about two centuries, the hideous maceration of the body was regarded as the highest proof of excellence. St. Jerome declares, with a thrill of admiration, how he had seen a monk, who for thirty years had lived exclusively on a small portion of barley bread and of mouldy water; another who lived in a hole and never ate more than five figs for his daily repast; a third who cut his hair only on Easter Sunday, who never washed his clothes, who never changed his tunic till it fell to pieces, who starved himself till his eyes grew dim, and his skin like a pumice stone. . . . For six months, it is said, St. Macarius of Alexandria slept in a marsh, and exposed his naked body to the stings of venomous flies.

. . . His disciple, St. Eusebius, carried one hundred and fifty pounds of iron, and lived for three years in a dried-up well. . . . St. Besarion spent forty days and nights in the middle of thorn bushes, and for forty days and nights never lay down when he slept. . . . Some saints, like St. Marcian, restricted themselves to one meal a day, so small that they continually suffered the pangs of hunger. . . . Some of the hermits lived in deserted dens of wild beasts, others in dried-up wells, while others found a congenial resting-place among the tombs. Some disdained all clothes, and crawled abroad like the wild beasts, covered only by their matted hair. The cleanliness of the body was regarded as a pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of clotted filth. St. Athanasius relates with enthusiasm how St. Antony, the patriarch of monachism, had never, to extreme old age, been guilty of washing his feet. . . . St. Abraham, the hermit, however, who lived for fifty years after his conversion, rigidly refused from that date to wash either his face or his feet. . . . St. Ammon had never seen himself naked. A famous virgin, named Sylvia, though she was sixty years old, and though bodily sickness was a consequence of her habits, resolutely refused, on religious principles, to wash any part of her body except her fingers. St. Euphraxia joined a convent of one hundred and thirty nuns, who never washed their feet, and who shuddered at the mention of a bath." *

* *History of European Morals*, ii. pp. 107–10. For a careful description of the monastic discipline in its more normal aspects, see Bingham's Works, vol. ii. bk. vi. Gibbon gives his usual brilliant summary of the movement in chapter xxxvii. of the *Decline and Fall*. A host of facts similar to those cited by Lecky

It is difficult to realise what it is exactly that some writers have in their minds when they praise the purity of the ascetic ideal, and lament its degradation as though society lost something of great value thereby. The examples cited realised that ideal as well as it could be realised, and its anti-social character is unmistakable. If it is intended to imply that an element of self-denial or self-discipline is essential to healthy development, that is admitted, but this is not the ascetic ideal; it is that of temperance as taught by the best of the ancient philosophers. What the ascetic aimed at was not self-development, but self-suppression. The discipline of the monk was only another name for the cultivation of a frame of mind unhealthy and anti-social. Eventually, the rapidity with which this mania spread, the fact that for several centuries it raged as a veritable epidemic, carried with it the germs of a corrective. The more numerous monks and nuns became, the more certain it became that many of them would develop passions and propensities they professed to despise. The love of ease and wealth, the lust of power and pride of place, was sure to find expression, and if by the degradation of the ascetic ideal is meant the fact that the preachers of poverty, and humility, and meekness, became the wealthiest, the most powerful, the most corrupt, and the most tyrannical order in Christendom, the reason is that not even monasticism could prevent ordinary

will be found in *The Book of Paradise*, 2 vols., trans. by Wallis Budge. Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* gives the classical and authoritative account of the moral consequences of the practice of celibacy. For a vivid picture of the psychology of the ascetic, see Flaubert's great romance, *St. Antony*.

human passions from finding expression. They might be suppressed in the case of a few; it became impossible with a multitude. That they found expression in so disastrous a form was due to the fact that the disciplinary agent of these passions, a developed social consciousness, played so small a part in the life of the monk.

It is no part of my present purpose to trace the full consequences of the ascetic epidemic. Some of these consequences, however, have a more or less direct bearing upon this enquiry, and it is necessary to say something upon them. One enduring and inevitable consequence of monasticism has not, I think, been adequately noted by many writers. This is its influence on the ideal of marriage, on the family, and on the domestic virtues. In India and Egypt celibacy had been closely associated with the religious life, but the ascetic was regarded as a man peculiarly apart from his fellows, and the family continued to be held in great honour, even by religious writers. Christianity provided for the first time a body of writers who made a direct attack upon marriage as obstructing the supreme duty of spiritual development. The Rev. Principal Donaldson, in his generally excellent book on *Woman*, professes to find some difficulty in accounting for the growth among the early Christians of the feeling in favour of celibacy. He remarks that "no one with the New Testament as his guide could venture to assert that marriage was wrong." Not wrong, certainly; but anyone with the New Testament before him would be justified in asserting marriage to be inferior to celibacy. It is at most taken for granted; it is neither commended nor recommended, and of its

social value there is never a glimpse. And there is much on the other side. Paul's teaching is strongly in favour of celibacy, and marriage is only advised to avoid a greater evil. In the Book of *Revelation* there is a reference to the 144,000 saints who wait on "the Lamb," and who "were not defiled with women, but were virgins." Certainly the New Testament does not condemn marriage, but it is idle to pretend that those who preached the celibate ideal failed to find therein a warranty for their teaching.

The historic fact is, however, that the early Christian leaders were, in the main, ardent advocates of celibacy. The social importance of marriage being ignored, its functions became those of ministering to sexual passion and the perpetuation of the race. In view of the supposed approaching end of the world, the desirability of this last was questioned, and in the name of purity the former was strongly denounced. It is from these points of view that Tertullian describes children as "burdens which are to most of us perilous as being unsuitable to faith," and wives as women of the second degree of modesty who had fallen into wedlock. Jerome said that marriage was at best a sin, and all that could be done was to excuse and purify it. Epiphanius said that the Church was based upon virginity as upon a corner-stone. Augustine was of opinion that celibates would shine in heaven like dazzling stars. Married people were declared, by another authority, to be incapable of salvation. The most powerful and most influential of writers concurred that the sexual relation was an almost fatal obstacle to religious salvation.

Hardly any movement ever struck so hard against

social well-being as did this teaching of celibacy. Wives were encouraged to desert their husbands, husbands to forsake their wives, children their parents. Parents, in turn, were exhorted to devote their children to the monastic life; and although at first children who had been so condemned were allowed to return to the world, should they desire it, on reaching maturity, this liberty was taken from them by the fourth Council of Toledo in 633.* Some few of the Christian writers protested against children being taught to forsake their parents in this manner, but the general spirit of the time was in its favour.

"Children were nursed and trained to expect at every instant more than human interferences; their young energies had ever before them examples of asceticism, to which it was the glory, the true felicity of life, to aspire. The thoughtful child had all his mind thus preoccupied ... wherever there was gentleness, modesty, the timidity of young passion, repugnance to vice, an imaginative temperament, a consciousness of unfitness to wrestle with the rough realities of life, the way lay invitingly open.... It lay through perils, but was made attractive by perpetual wonders. It was awful, but in its awfulness lay its power over the young mind. It learned to trample down that last bond which united the child to common humanity, filial reverence; the fond and mysterious attachment of the child and the mother, the inborn reverence of the son to the father. It is the highest praise of St. Fulgentius that he overcame his mother's tenderness by religious cruelty." †

* Cited by Lecky, ii. p. 131.

† Dean Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, ii. pp. 81–2.

The full warranty for Dean Milman's stricture is seen in the following passage from St. Jerome:—

"Though your little nephew twine his arms around your neck; though your mother, with dishevelled hair, and tearing her robe asunder, point to the breast with which she suckled you; though your father fall down on the threshold before you, pass on over your father's body. Fly with tearless eyes to the banner of the cross. In this matter cruelty is the only piety.... Your widowed sister may throw her gentle arms around you.... Your father may implore you to wait but a short time to bury those near to you, who will soon be no more; your weeping mother may recall your childish days, and may point to her shrunken breast and to her wrinkled brow. Those around you may tell you that all the household rests upon you. Such chains as these the love of God and the fear of hell can easily break. You say that Scripture orders you to obey your parents, but he who loves them more than Christ loses his soul. The enemy brandishes a sword to slay me. Shall I think of a mother's tears?" *

Gibbon said of the ascetic movement that the Pagan world regarded with astonishment a society that perpetuated itself without marriage. Unfortunately this perpetuation was secured by the sacrifice of some of the dearest interests of the race. For, in general, one may say that idealistic teaching of any kind appeals most powerfully to those who are least in need of it. The world would at any time lose little, and might possibly gain much, were it possible to restrain a certain class from parentage. But there is no evidence that monasticism ever had its effect on that

* Lecky, ii. pp. 134–5.

kind of people; the presumption is indeed in the contrary direction. The careless and brutal hear and are unaffected. The more thoughtful and desirable alone are influenced. And there can be little doubt that the Church in appealing to certain aspects of human nature dissuaded from parentage those who were most fitted for the task. There was a practical survival of the unfittest. Nothing is more striking, in fact, in the early history of Christianity than the comparative absence of home life and of the domestic ideals. Dean Milman remarked that in all the discussion concerning celibacy he could not recall a single instance where the social aspects appear to have occurred to the disputants. The Dean's remark applies to some extent to a much later period of Christian history than the one to which he refers. That much-admired evangelical classic, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, shows a curious obliviousness to the value of family and social life. But neglect of the socialising and refining influence of family life leads inevitably to a hardening of character and a brutalising of life in general. The ferocious nature of the theological disputes of the early Christian period never fail to arouse the comments of historians. But there was really nothing to soften or restrain them. Everything was dominated by the theological interest. And we owe it in no small measure to the vogue of the monk that the tolerance of Pagan times, with its widespread respect for truth-seeking, was replaced by the narrow intolerance of the medieval period, an intolerance which has never really been eradicated from any part of Christian Europe.

In counting this as one of the consequences of the

Christian preaching of celibacy, I am supported by no less an authority than the late Sir Francis Galton. In his epoch-marking work, *Hereditary Genius*, this writer says:—

"The long period of the Dark Ages under which Europe has lain is due, I believe, in a very considerable degree, to the celibacy enjoined by the religious orders on their votaries. Whenever a man or woman was possessed of a gentle nature that fitted him or her to deeds of charity, to meditation, to literature, or to art, the social condition of the time was such that they had no refuge elsewhere than in the bosom of the Church. But she chose to preach and exact celibacy. The consequence was that these gentle natures had no continuance, and thus by a policy so singularly unwise and suicidal that I am hardly able to speak of it without impatience, the Church brutalised the breed of our forefathers. She acted precisely as if she had aimed at selecting the rudest portion of the community to be alone the parents of future generations. She practised the arts that breeders would use, who aimed at creating ferocious, currish, and stupid nature. No wonder that club law prevailed for centuries over Europe; the wonder rather is that enough good remained in the veins of Europeans to enable their race to rise to its very moderate level of natural morality."*

The consequences of asceticism on morals were almost wholly disastrous. There is no intention of endorsing the vulgar Protestant prejudice of every convent being a brothel, and all monks and nuns as given over to a vicious life, but there is no question that a very widespread demoralisation existed amongst the

* *Hereditary Genius*, 1869, p. 357.

religious orders, that this existed from the very earliest times, and that it was an inevitable consequence of so large a number of people professing the ascetic life. This is not a history of morals, and it is needless to enter into a detailed account of the state of morality during the prevalence of asceticism. But the absence of any favourable influence exerted by asceticism on conduct is well illustrated in the description of Salvianus, Bishop of Marseilles at the close of the fifth century, of the condition of society in his day. Gaul, Spain, Italy, and Africa are depicted as sunk in an overmastering sensuality. Rome is represented as the sewer of the nations, and in the African Church, he says, the most diligent search can scarce discover one chaste among thousands. And this, it must be borne in mind, was the African Church, which under the care of Augustine had been specially nurtured in the most rigid asceticism. Four hundred years later the state of monastic morals is sufficiently indicated by a regulation of St. Theodore Studita prohibiting the entrance of female animals into monasteries.* A regulation passed in Paris at a Council held in 1212 enforces the same lesson by forbidding monks or nuns sleeping two in a bed. The avowed object of this was to repress offences of the most disgusting description.† In 1208 an order was issued prohibiting mothers or other female relatives residing with priests, on account of the frequent scandals arising. Offences became so numerous and so open that it was with relief that laymen saw priests openly select concubines. That at least gave a promise of some protection to domestic life. In some of the Swiss cantons it actually became

* Lea, p. 109. † Lea, p. 332.

the practice to compel a new pastor, on taking up his charge, to select a concubine as a necessary protection to the females under his care. The same practice existed in Spain.*

There is, as Lea rightly says, no injustice in holding the Church mainly responsible for the laxity of morals which is characteristic of medieval society. It had unbounded and unquestioned power, and this with its wealth and privileges might have made medieval society the purest in the world. As it was, "the period of its unquestioned domination over the conscience of Europe was the very period in which licence among the Teutonic races was most unchecked. A church which, though founded on the Gospel, and wielding the illimitable power of the Roman hierarchy, could yet allow the feudal principle to extend to the *jus primæ noctis* or *droit de marquette*, and whose ministers in their character of temporal seigneurs could even occasionally claim the disgusting right, was evidently exercising its influence, not for good, but for evil."

On civic life and the civic virtues the influence of asceticism was equally disastrous. "A candid examination," says Lecky, "will show that the Christian civilisation has been as inferior to the Pagan ones in civic and intellectual virtues as it has been superior to them in the virtues of humanity and chastity." One may reasonably question the latter part of this statement, bearing in mind the facts just pointed out, but the first part admits of overwhelming proof. Celibacy is not chastity, and it is difficult to see how the coarsening of character described by Lecky himself can be consist-

* See Lea, pp. 353–4.

ent with a heightened humanity. But there can be small doubt that the growth of the Christian Church spelt disaster to the civic life and institutions of the Empire. Nothing the Romans did was more admirable than their organisation of municipal life. They avoided the common blunder of imposing on all a uniform organisation, and so gave free play to local feeling and custom so far as was consistent with imperial order and peace. Civic life became, as a consequence, well ordered and persistent. It was far less corrupt than administration in the capital, and freedom persisted in the provincial towns for long after its practical disappearance in Rome itself. Indeed, but for the antagonism of Christianity, it is probable that the urban municipalities might have provided the impetus for the rejuvenation of the Empire.*

From the outset, the early Christian movement stood as a whole apart from the civic life of the Empire, while the ascetic waged a constant warfare against it. "According to monastic view of Christianity," says Milman, "the total abandonment of the world, with all its ties and duties, as well as its treasures, its enjoyments, and objects of ambition, advanced rather than diminished the hopes of salvation." The object was individual salvation, not social regeneration. When people were praised for breaking the closest of family ties in their desire for salvation, it would be absurd to suppose that social duties and obligations would remain exempt. The Christian ascetic was ready enough to risk his own life, or to take the life of others, on account of minute points of doctrinal difference, but

* For a fine sketch of Roman municipal life, see Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, chap. ii.

he was deaf to the call of patriotism or the demands of civic life. Theology became the one absorbing topic; and as monasticism assumed more menacing proportions, the monk became the dominating figure, paralysing by his presence the healthful activities of masses of the people. Speaking of the Eastern Empire, although his words apply with almost equal truth wherever the Church was supreme, Milman says:—

"That which is the characteristic sign of the times as a social and political, as well as a religious, phenomenon, is the complete dominion assumed by the monks in the East over the public mind. . . The monks, in fact, exercise the most complete tyranny, not merely over the laity, but over bishops and patriarchs, whose rule, though nominally subject to it, they throw off whenever it suits their purposes. . . . Monks in Alexandria, monks in Antioch, monks in Constantinople, decide peremptorily on orthodoxy and heterodoxy. . . . Persecution is universal; persecution by every means of violence and cruelty; the only question is in whose hands is the power to persecute. . . . Bloodshed, murder, treachery, assassination, even during the public worship of God—these are the frightful means by which each party strives to maintain its opinions and to defeat its adversary. Ecclesiastical and civil authority are alike paralysed by combinations of fanatics ready to suffer or to inflict death, utterly unapproachable by reason."*

Against such combinations of ignorance, fanaticism, and ferocity, the few remaining lovers of secular progress were powerless. Patriotism became a mere

* *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, i. pp. 317–8.

name, and organised civic life an almost forgotten aspiration. What the Pagan world had understood by a 'good man' was one who spent himself in the service of his country. The Christian understood by it one who succeeded in saving his own soul, even at the sacrifice of family and friends. Vampire-like, monasticism fed upon the life-blood of the Empire. The civic life and patriotism of old Rome became a mere tradition, to inspire long after the men of the Renaissance and of the French Revolution.

Finally, asceticism exerted a powerful influence on religion itself. That it served to strengthen and perpetuate the life of religion there can be little doubt. However strongly some people may have resented the monastic ideal, it nevertheless gave increased strength and vitality to the religious idea. To begin with, it offered for centuries a very powerful obstacle to the development of those progressive and scientific ideas that have made such advances in all centres of civilisation during the past two or three centuries. To the common mind it brought home the supremacy of religion in a way that nothing else could. The mere sight of monarch and noble yielding homage to the monk, acknowledging his supremacy in what was declared to be the chief interest in life, the interference of the monk in every department of life, saturated society with supernaturalism. And although at a later period the rapacity, dissoluteness, and tyranny of the monkish orders led to revolt, by that time the imagination of all had been thoroughly impressed with the value of religion. Even to-day current theology is permeated with the monkish notions of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and contempt of the world's comfort and beauty as belong-

ing to the essence of pure religion. The lives of the saints still remain the storehouse of ideals for the religious preacher. In spite of their absurd practices and disgusting penances, later generations have not failed to hold them up as examples. They have been used to impress the imagination of their successors, as they were used to impress the minds of their contemporaries. The fact of Thomas à Beckett wearing a hair shirt running with vermin has not prevented his being held up as an example of the power of religion. People fear ghosts long after they cease to believe in them; they pay unreasoning homage to a crown long after intellectual development has robbed the kingly office of its primitive significance; all the recent developments of democracy have not abolished the Englishman's constitutional crick in the neck at the sight of a nobleman. Nor is supernaturalism expunged from a society because the conditions that gave it birth have passed away. A religious epidemic is not analogous to those physical disorders which deposit an antitoxin and so protect against future attacks. It resembles rather those disorders that permanently weaken, and so invite repeated assaults. The ascetic epidemic passed away; but, before doing so, it thoroughly saturated with supernaturalism the social atmosphere and impressed its power upon the public mind. It gave supernaturalism a new and longer lease of life, and paved the way for other outbreaks, of a less general, but still of a thoroughly epidemic character.

CHAPTER NINE RELIGIOUS EPIDEMICS—(*CONCLUDED*)

IT IS NOT EASY TO OVERESTIMATE THE influence of monasticism on subsequent religious history. The lives of its votaries provided examples of almost every conceivable kind of self-torture or semi-maniacal behaviour. It had made the world thoroughly familiar with extravagance of action as the symptom of intense religious conviction. And its influence on social development had been such that the susceptibility of the public mind to suggestions was as a raw wound in the presence of a powerful irritant. Such an institution as the Inquisition could only have maintained itself among a people thoroughly familiar with supernaturalism, and to whom its preservation was the first and most sacred of duties.

A society habituated to the commanding presence of the monk, fed upon stories of their miraculous encounters with celestial and diabolic visitants, and so accustomed to regard the priesthood as in a very peculiar sense the mouthpiece of divinity, was well prepared for such a series of events as the crusades for the recovery of the Holy Land. Pilgrimages to the burial-places of saints, and to spots connected, by legend or otherwise, with Christian history, had long been in vogue, and formed a source of both revenue to the Church and of inspiration to the faithful. As early as 833 a guide-book had been prepared called the *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem*, and along the route marked convents and shelters for the pilgrims were established. A lucrative traffic in relics of every description had also been established, and any interference with this touched the Church in its tenderest point. Added to which the expected end of the world in the

year 1000 had the effect of still further increasing the crowd of pilgrims to the Holy Land, where it was firmly believed the second advent would take place.

In the eleventh century a tax was imposed on all Christians visiting Jerusalem. There were also reports of Christian pilgrims being ill-treated. Recent events in Europe have shown with what ease Christian feeling may be roused against a Mohammedan power, and it was considerably easier to do this in the eleventh century. Between them, Pope Urban II. and Peter the Hermit—the former acting mainly from political motives, the latter from a spirit of sheer fanaticism—succeeded in rousing Europe to a maniacal desire for the recovery of the Holy Land. And for nearly two hundred years the world saw a series of crusades on as absurd an errand as ever engaged the energies of mankind. Every class of society participated, and it is calculated that no less than two millions of lives were sacrificed.

Ordinary histories lean to representing the crusades as a series of armed expeditions, led by princes, nobles, and kings. But this gives a quite inaccurate conception of the movement, during its early stages, at all events. In reality it was a true psychological epidemic. No custom, however ancient, no duty, no law, was allowed to stand before the crusading mania. In every village the clergy fed the mania, promising eternal rewards to all who took up the burden of the cross. Old and young, the strong and the sick, the rich and the poor were enrolled. Urban had told them that "under their General, Jesus Christ," they would march to certain victory. Absolution for all sins was promised to all who joined; and, as Gibbon says, "at the voice of

their pastor, the robber, the incendiary, the homicide, arose by thousands to redeem their souls by repeating on the infidels the same deeds which they had exercised against their Christian brethren." Until experience had taught them better, little precautions were taken to provide food or arms. Huge concourses of people,* some led by a goose and a goat, into which it was believed the Holy Ghost had entered, set out for the Holy Land, so ignorant that at every large town or city they enquired, "Is this Zion?" Although a religious expedition, small regard was paid to decency or humanity. Defenceless cities *en route* were sacked. Women were outraged, men and children killed. The Jews were murdered wholesale. Almost universally the slaughter of Jews at home were preparatory to crusading abroad. Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, although providing contingents for the crusading army, suffered heavily by the passage of these undisciplined, lawless crowds. As one writer says:—

"If they had devoted themselves to the service of God, they convinced the inhabitants on their line of march that they had ceased to regard the laws of man. They considered themselves privileged to gratify every wish and every lust as it arose. They recognised no rights of property, they felt no gratitude for hospitality, and they possessed no sense of honour. They violated the wives and daughters of their hosts when they were kindly treated, they devastated the lands of friends whom they had converted into enemies, they resorted to wanton robbery and destruction in revenge for calamities which they had brought upon them-

* It is estimated that 275,000 people formed the van of the first crusade.

selves. They believed that they proved their superiority to the Mohammedans by torturing the defenceless Jews; and this was the only exploit in which the first divisions of the crusaders could boast of success. . . . To the leaders, who could not write their own names, deception and treachery were as familiar as force; to their followers rapine and murder were so congenial that, in the absence of Saracens, Jews, or townsfolk, it seemed but a professional pastime to kill or to rob a companion in arms."*

And of the behaviour of the crusaders on the first capture of Jerusalem, 1099, Dean Milman writes:—

"No barbarian, no infidel, no Saracen, ever perpetrated such wanton and cold-blooded atrocities of cruelty as the wearers of the Cross of Christ (who, it is said, had fallen on their knees and burst into a pious hymn at the first view of the Holy City) on the capture of that city. Murder was mercy, rape tenderness, simple plunder the mere assertion of the conqueror's right. Children were seized by their legs, some of them plucked from their mother's breasts, and dashed against the walls, or whirled from the battlements. Others were obliged to leap from the walls; some tortured, roasted by slow fires. They ripped up prisoners to see if they had swallowed gold. Of 70,000 Saracens there were not left enough to bury the dead; poor Christians were hired to perform the office. Everyone surprised in the Temple was slaughtered, till the reek from the dead drove away the slayers. The Jews were burned alive in their synagogue."†

The most remarkable of all the crusades, and the

* L. O. Pike, *History of Crime in England*, i. pp. 164–9.

† *History of Latin Christianity*, iv. p. 188.

one that best shows the character of the epidemic, was the children's crusade of 1212. It was said that the sins of the crusaders had caused their failure, and priests went about France and Germany calling upon the children to do what the sins of their fathers had prevented them accomplishing. The children were told that the sea would dry up to give them passage, and the infidels be stricken by the Lord on their approach. A peasant lad, Stephen of Cloyes, received the usual vision, and was ordered to lead the crusade. Commencing with the children around Paris, he collected some 30,000 followers, and without money or food commenced the march. At the same time an army of children, 40,000 strong, was gathered together at Cologne. The result of the crusade may be told in a few words. About 6000 of the French contingent, having reached Marseilles, were offered a passage by some shipowners. Several of the ships foundered, others reached shore, and the boys were sold into slavery. The girls were reserved for a more sinister fate. Thousands of the children died in attempting a march over the Alps. A mere remnant succeeded in reaching home, ruined in both mind and body. Well might Fuller say: "This crusade was done by the instinct of the devil, who, as it were, desired a cordial of children's blood, to comfort his weak stomach, long cloyed with murdering of men."*

On both the social and the religious side the consequences were important. For the first time large bodies of men, taught to regard all those who were outside Christendom as beneath consideration, came into contact with a people possessing an art, an industry, a

* *History of the Holy War*, bk. iii.

culture far superior to their own. As Draper says: "Even down to the meanest camp follower, everyone must have recognised the difference between what they had anticipated and what they had found. They had seen undaunted courage, chivalrous bearing, intellectual culture far higher than their own. They had been in lands filled with prodigies of human skill. They did not melt down into the populations to whom they returned without imparting to them a profound impression destined to make itself felt in the course of time."* Hitherto Mohammedan culture had only influenced Christendom through the medium of the Spanish schools and universities. Now the influence became more general. A taste for greater comfort developed. Commerce grew; literature improved. We approach the period of the Renaissance, and to that new birth the crusades, despite their intolerance and brutality, offered a contribution of no small value.

On the other hand, and for a time, the power of the Church grew greater. The impetus given to superstitious hopes and fears made on all hands for the wealth of the Church. Much was made over to the Church as a free gift. Much was pawned to it. Much also was entrusted by those who went to the Holy Land, never to return, in which case the Church became the designated or undesignated heir. "In every way the all-absorbing Church was still gathering in wealth, encircling new land within her hallowed pale, the one steady merchant who in this vast traffic and sale of personal and of landed property never made a losing venture, but went on accumulating and still accumulating, and for the most part withdrawing the largest portion of

* *Intellectual Development of Europe*, 1872, p. 425.

the land in every kingdom into a separate estate, which claimed exemption from all burthens of the realm, until the realm was compelled into measures, violent often and iniquitous in their mode, but still inevitable."*

Next, the crusades set their seal upon the justice of religious wars, and established an enduring alliance between militarism and religion. The military profession became surrounded with all the ceremonies and paraphernalia of religion, without being in the least humanised by the alliance. The knight received his arms blessed by the Church, he was sworn to defend the Church, and he was as ready to turn his weapons against heretics in Europe as against infidels in Syria. Military persecutions of heretics assumed the form of a mania. There were crusades against the Moors in Spain, against the Albigenses, and against other heretics. As Bryce remarks: "The religious feeling which the crusades evoked—a feeling which became the origin of the great orders of chivalry, and somewhat later of the two great orders of mendicant friars—turned wholly against the opponents of ecclesiastical claims, and was made to work the will of the Holy See, which had blessed and organised the project."† The expedition against King John by Philip of France was undertaken at the behest of the Pope, and was called a crusade. The attempt of Spain to crush the Netherlands was called a crusade. So was the Armada that was fitted out against England.

More than all, a stamp of permanency was given to popular superstition. For two centuries people had seen expedition after expedition fitted out to accom-

* Milman, iv. p. 199. † *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 164.

plish an avowedly religious purpose. They had been taught that to die in defence of religion, or in the attempt to achieve a religious object, was the noblest of deaths. They had seen the greatest in Europe setting forth at the command of the Church. Signs and wonders had abounded to prove the heaven-blessed character of the crusades. They had seen the Church growing steadily in power, and every possible means had been utilised to increase the flame of religious fanaticism. Expeditions might fail, but failure did not cure fanaticism. It fed it; the crusaders returned, chastened in some respects, but still sufficiently full of religious zeal to be ready to battle against the unbeliever and the heretic at the behest of the Church. And it was not the policy of the Church to allow this fanaticism to remain unemployed. Even though it might ultimately lose, the Church and superstition profited enormously by the crusading spirit. It strengthened the general sense of the supernatural, even while creating tendencies that were destined to limit its sway. Above all, it prepared the way for other religious epidemics. These were more circumscribed in area, and less lengthy in their duration; but their existence was made possible and easy by the centuries during which, first monasticism, and later the crusading mania, had dominated the public mind.

The crusades had hardly been brought to a close before continental Europe witnessed an outbreak, in epidemic form, of a practice that had been long associated with monastic discipline. The use of the whip as a form of religious discipline had always played a part in conventual and monastic life. On the one hand, it formed part of that insensate desire to tor-

ture the body which went to make up the ascetic ideal; on the other hand, the fondness for whipping bare flesh and for being whipped has a distinctly pathologic character. The subject is rather too unsavoury to dwell upon, but it has long been established that there is a close connection between the whipping of certain parts of the body and the production of intense sexual pleasure.* And it is also clear that the life led by monks and nuns was such as to encourage sexual aberrations of various forms. Moreover, when once the practice of whipping became a public spectacle, and assumed an epidemic form, imitation, combined with intense religious faith, would operate very powerfully.

In the fourteenth century Europe was visited by the Black Plague. In countries utterly devoid of sanitation, where baths were practically unknown and personal habits of the filthiest, the plague found a fruitful soil. Nearly a quarter of the population died, and corpses were so numerous that huge pits were dug and hundreds buried together. It was amid the general terror and demoralisation caused by this visitation that the sect of the Flagellants arose. Calling themselves the Brotherhood of the Flagellants, or the Brethren of the Cross, wearing dark garments with red crosses front and back, they traversed the cities of the Continent carrying whips to which small pieces of iron were fixed. England appears to have been the only country in which they failed to establish themselves. Elsewhere their numbers grew with formidable rapidity. At Spires two hundred boys, under twelve years of age, influenced probably by the ex-

* See Bloch, *Sexual Life of our Time*, pp. 568–74.

ample of the children's crusade, formed themselves into a brotherhood and marched through some of the German cities. In Italy over 20,000 people marched from Florence in one of these processions; from Modena, over 25,000. Some of them professed to work miracles. Everywhere, while the mania lasted, they were warmly welcomed, the inhabitants of towns and cities ringing the bells and flocking in crowds to hear the preaching and witness the whippings.

The proceedings of the Flagellants in all countries were very similar. They marched from town to town, men and women and children stripped to the waist—sometimes entirely naked—praying incessantly and whipping each other. "Not only during the day, but even by night, and in the severest winter, they traversed the cities with torches and banners, in thousands and tens of thousands, headed by their priests, and prostrated themselves before the altars." At other times they proceeded to the market-place, arranged themselves on the ground in circles, assuming attitudes in accordance with their real or supposed crimes. After each had been whipped, "one of them, in conclusion, stood up to read a letter, which it was pretended an angel had brought from heaven to St. Peter's Church, at Jerusalem, stating that Christ, who was sore displeased at the sins of man, had granted, at the intercession of the Holy Virgin and of the angels, that all who should wander about for thirty-four days and scourge themselves should be partakers of the Divine grace." In the end the movement became so obnoxious to the Church, and so troublesome to the civil authorities, that both combined to secure its suppression.

Equally significant in the history of religion is the dancing mania, which broke out as the mania for flagellation was subsiding. The function of dancing in primitive religious ceremonial has been pointed out in a previous chapter. It is there a common and obvious method of both creating and expressing a high state of nervous excitability. In later times religious dancing becomes more purely hypnotic in character, and suggestion plays a powerful part. During the medieval period the conditions were peculiarly favourable to the prevalence of psychological epidemics. Plagues, more or less severe, were of frequent occurrence. Between 1119 and 1340, Italy alone had no less than sixteen such visitations. Smallpox and leprosy were also common. The public mind was morbidly sensitive to signs and portents and saturated to an almost incredible degree with superstition. The public processions of the Church, its penances, and practices were all calculated to fire the imagination, and produce a mixed and dangerous condition of fear and expectancy. Moreover, dancing mania, on a small scale, had made its appearance on several previous occasions, and the public mind was thus in a way prepared for a more serious outbreak.

The great dancing mania of 1374 occurred immediately after the revels connected with the semi-Pagan festival of St. John. Bacchanalian dances formed one of the accompaniments of the festival of St. John, and made, so to speak, a natural starting-point for the epidemic. Hecker, who gives a very elaborate account of the dancing mania as it appeared in various countries, thus describes the behaviour of those afflicted:—

"They formed circles, hand in hand, and, appear-

ing to have lost control over their senses, continued dancing, regardless of all bystanders, for hours together, in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. . . . While dancing, they neither saw nor heard, being insensible to external impressions, but were haunted by visions, their fancies conjuring up spirits whose names they shrieked out; and some of them afterwards asserted that they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream of blood, which obliged them to leap so high. Others, during the paroxysm, saw the heavens open and the Saviour enthroned with the Virgin Mary."*

At Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, and Metz, says the same writer:—

"Peasants left their ploughs, mechanics their workshops, housewives their domestic duties, to join the wild revels. Secret desires were excited, and but too often found opportunities for wild enjoyment; and numerous beggars, stimulated by vice and misery, availed themselves of this new complaint to gain a temporary livelihood. Girls and boys quitted their parents, and servants their masters, to amuse themselves at the dances of those possessed, and greedily imbibed the poison of mental infection. Above a hundred unmarried women were seen raving about in consecrated and unconsecrated places, and the consequences were soon perceived."†

Once attacked, the hypnotic character of the complaint was shown by its annual recurrence. Again to quote Hecker:—

"Most of those affected were only annually visited

* *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, pp. 87–8.

† Hecker, p. 91.

by attacks; and the occasion of them was so manifestly referable to the prevailing notions of that period that, if the unqualified belief in the agency of saints could have been abolished, they would not have had any return of the complaint. Throughout the whole of June, prior to the festival of St. John, patients felt a disquietude and restlessness which they were unable to overcome. They were dejected, timid, and anxious; wandered about in an unsettled state, being tormented with twitching pains, which seized them suddenly in different parts, and eagerly expected the eve of St. John's Day, in the confident hope that by dancing at the altars of this saint they would be freed from all their sufferings. This hope was not disappointed; and they remained, for the rest of the year, exempt from any further attack."*

In addition to John the Baptist, the dancing disease was also connected with another saint—St. Vitus. He is said to have been martyred about 303, and a body, reputed to be his, was transported to France in the ninth century. It is said that just before he was killed he prayed that all who would commemorate the day of his death should be protected from the dancing mania. Whereupon a voice from heaven was heard to say, "Vitus, thy prayer is accepted." The fact that the prayer was offered a thousand years before the dancing mania appeared is a circumstance that to the eye of faith merely heightened its value.

Within recent times epidemics of dancing have been more local, less persistent, and of necessity not so public in their display, but nearly always their appearance has been in connection with displays of re-

* *Epidemics*, p. 105.

ligious fervour. In most cases the dancing has tended more to a species of 'jumping,' and—although this may be due to more careful observation—has been accompanied by actions of a clearly epileptoid nature. One of the most famous of these outbreaks was that of the French Convulsionnaires, which lasted from 1727 to the Revolution. In 1727, a popular, but half-crazy priest, François de Paris, died. During his life Paris had fasted and scourged himself, lived in a hut that was seldom or never cleansed, showed the same lack of cleanliness in his person, and often went about half naked. Very shortly after his death, it was said that miracles began to take place at his grave in the cemetery of St. Médard. People gathered round the tomb day after day, and one young girl was seized with convulsions. (She is called a girl in the narrative, but she was a mature virgin of forty-two years of age.) Afterwards other miracles followed in rapid succession. Some fell in fits, others swallowed pieces of coal or flint, some were cured of diseases. From the description of the behaviour of some of these devotees there seems to have been a considerable amount of sexual feeling mixed up with the display. Sometimes, we are told, those seized "bounded from the ground like fish out of water; this was so frequently imitated at a later period that the women and girls, when they expected such violent contortions, not wishing to appear indecent, put on gowns made like sacks, closed at the feet. If they received any bruises by falling down, they were healed with earth taken from the grave of the uncanonised saint. They usually, however, showed great agility in this respect; and it is scarcely necessary to remark that the female sex es-

pecially was distinguished by all kinds of leaping, and almost inconceivable contortions of body. Some spun round on their feet with incredible rapidity, as is related of the dervishes. Others ran with their heads against walls, or curved their bodies like rope dancers, so that their heels touched their shoulders."

Women figured very prominently among the Convulsionnaires, particularly when the epidemic passed from convulsive dancing to prophecy, and thence to various forms of self-torture. Women stretched themselves on the floor, while other women, and even men, jumped upon their bodies. Others were beaten with clubs and bars of iron. Some actually underwent crucifixion on repeated occasions. They were stretched on wooden crosses, and nails three inches long driven through hands and feet. Some of the occurrences remind one of what is now seen to take place under hypnotic influence. People labouring under strong excitement, it is known, become insensible to pain.

Outbreaks of jumping and dancing followed the introduction of Methodist preachers into country districts in the eighteenth century. In Wales, a sect of 'Jumpers' originated from this cause, and many of the American 'Jumpers' and 'Dancers' seem to have had their origin from this Welsh outbreak. In all such cases the spread of the mania was helped, if not made possible, by the preachers. They themselves looked upon these exhibitions as manifestations of the power of God, and so encouraged their hearers in their behaviour. Not every minister has the common sense of the Shetland preacher cited by Hecker. An epileptic woman had a fit in church, which a number of

others hailed as a manifestation of the power of God. Sunday after Sunday the same thing occurred with other women, the number of the sufferers steadily increasing. The thing threatened to assume such proportions, and to become so great a nuisance, he announced that attendants would be athand who would dip women in the lake who happened to be seized. This threat proved a most powerful form of exorcism. Not one woman was affected. Similar conduct might have been quite as efficacious in preventing many religious manifestations that have assumed epidemic proportions.

Unfortunately, the influence of preachers and religious teachers was most usually cast in the other direction. Very often, of course, they were no better informed than their congregations; at other times they undoubtedly encouraged the delusion for interested reasons. The most striking recent illustration of this latter behaviour was seen in the Welsh revival led by Evan Roberts. Of this man's mental condition there could be little doubt. Just as little doubt could there be that the behaviour of the congregations was wholly due to the power of suggestions upon weak and excitable natures. Yet scarcely a preacher in Britain said a word in disapproval. Hundreds of them used the outbreak to illustrate the power of religion. Many prominent preachers travelled down to Wales and returned telling of the great manifestations of 'spiritual power' they had witnessed. How little removed such behaviour is from that of the savage watching with awe the actions of one suffering from epilepsy or insanity, readers of the foregoing pages will be in a position to judge.

From the middle of the third century onward, Europe had been subject to wave after wave of religious fanaticism. All along, religious belief had been verified and strengthened by the occurrence of phenomena that now admittedly fall within the purview of the pathologist. And from one point of view the secularisation of life served but to emphasise the dependence of religion upon the occurrence of these abnormal conditions. For the more surely the phenomena of nature and of social life were brought within the scope of a scientific generalisation, the more people began to look for the life of religion in conditions that were removed from the normal. But, above all, this long succession of waves of fanaticism served to permeate the general mind with supernaturalism. Each one cleared the way for a successor. And in the next chapter we have to deal with one that, in some respects, is the most remarkable of all, viz., that of the belief in witchcraft.

CHAPTER TEN THE WITCH MANIA

IN ALL STAGES OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY the witch and the wizard are familiar figures. It is of no importance to our present enquiry whether magic precedes religion or not. It is at all events certain that they are very closely connected, and that conditions which foster the belief in magic likewise serve to strengthen religious belief. Witchcraft, as Tylor says, is part and parcel of savage life. Death is very frequently attributed to the magical action of wizards, and the savage lives in perpetual fear lest some of his belongings, or some part of his person, should be bewitched by malevolent sorcerers. Sir Richard Burton says that in East Africa his experience taught him that among the negroes, what with slavery and what with black magic, no one, especially in old age, is safe from being burnt at a day's notice. When from savage life we mount to societies enjoying a higher culture, we still find the witch and the wizard in evidence. Both in Greece and Rome the belief in witchcraft existed. There were made direct laws against its practice, although neither the Greeks nor the Romans stained their civilisation with the judicial murder of thousands of victims such as occurred later in Christian Europe.

But the belief in witchcraft is continuous. So also are the methods practised, and the modes of detection. The proofs offered in support of sorcery in the seventeenth century are precisely similar to those credited by savages in the lowest stage of human culture. The power of transformation possessed by the accused, the ability to bewitch through the possession of hairs belonging to the afflicted person, the making of little effigies and driving sharp instruments into them, and

so affecting the corresponding parts of people, transportation through the air, etc., all belong to the belief in and practice of witchcraft wherever found. Had a Fijian been transported to a seat on the judicial bench by the side of Sir Matthew Hale, when that judge condemned two old women to death for witchcraft, he would have found himself in a quite congenial atmosphere. Allowing for difference in language, he would have found the evidence similar to that with which he was familiar, and he would have been able to endorse the judge's remarks with tales of his own experience. On this point, the level of culture attained by savages, and that of the inhabitants of the overwhelming majority of European countries little more than two hundred years ago, were substantially the same. Even to-day cases are continually occurring which prove that advances in knowledge and civilisation have not left this ancient superstition without supporters.

In subscribing to the belief in witchcraft, the Christian Church thus fell into line with earlier forms of religious belief. The peculiar feature it represents is that it came into existence when the belief in witchcraft was losing its hold on the more cultured classes. Had it not allied itself with this tendency, no such thing as the witch mania of the medieval period could have existed. In sober truth, it brought about a veritable renaissance of the cruder theories of demonism, while its intolerance of opposition succeeded in stifling the voice of criticism for centuries. The primitive theory which holds that man is surrounded by hosts of spiritual agencies, mostly of a malevolent nature, was revived and fully endorsed by all Christian teachers. In the commonest, as well as in the rarest events of life,

this supernatural activity was manifest. In both the Old and New Testament the belief in demoniacal agency was endorsed. Moreover, the fact that Christianity was not a creed seeking to live as one of many others, but a religion struggling for complete mastery, gave further impetus to the belief. An easy explanation for the miracles and marvels that occurred in connection with non-Christian beliefs was that they were the work of demons. The Christian felt himself to be fighting not so much human antagonists as so many embodiments of satanic power. And after the establishment of Christianity it is probable that much that went on under cover of witch assemblies, a more detailed knowledge than we possess would prove to be really the clandestine exercise of prescribed forms of faith. The old saying, "The sin of witchcraft is as the sin of rebellion," has more in it than meets the eye. There is little real difference between the magic that appears as piety and the magic that is denounced as sorcery, except that one is permitted and the other is not. And it is almost a law of religious development that the gods of one religion become the demons of its successor.

But while witchcraft has existed in all ages, it existed in a much milder form than that which we find in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. First of all, there is the fact to which attention has already been directed, namely, the concentration of the public mind upon various forms of supernaturalism. Every aspect of life was more or less under the direct influence of the Church, and no teaching was tolerated that conflicted with her doctrines. And it was to the interest of the Church perpetually to emphasise the reality of

either angelic or diabolic activity. Even in the case of those who showed a tendency to revolt against Church rule there was no exception to this. If anything, the belief was more pronounced. Next, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a rising tide of heresy against which the Church was compelled to battle; and to ascribe this alleged perversion of Christian doctrines to the malevolence of Satan offered the line of least resistance—just as the heretics attributed the power of the Church itself to the same source. Whatever diminution ensued in the general flood of superstition, as a consequence of the quarrel between Protestant and Catholic, was, so far as the disputants were concerned, incidental and even undesired. On the one point of demonism there existed complete unanimity, and the sceptic fared equally hard with both parties. In such an environment the wildest tales of sorcery became credible; and nothing illustrates this more forcibly than the fact that many of those tortured and condemned for sorcery actually believed themselves capable of performing the marvels laid to their charge. Added to these factors, we have to note that social conditions were also extremely favourable. Moral ties were as loose as they could reasonably be; and the attitude of the Church towards the sexual relation had forced both the religious and the non-religious mind into wholly unhealthy channels. This last aspect of the subject has been little dealt with, but it is unquestionably a very real one. A German writer says:—

"Whilst in the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, as those well acquainted with the state of morals during this period can all confirm, a

most unbounded freedom was dominant in sexual relations, the State and the Church were desirous of compelling the people to keep better order by the use of actual force, and by religious compulsion. So forced a transformation in so vital a matter necessarily resulted in a reaction of the worst kind, and forced into secret channels the impulse which it had attempted to suppress. This reaction occurred, moreover, with an elemental force. There resulted widespread sexual violence and seduction, hesitating at nothing, often insanely daring, in which everywhere the devil was supposed to help; everyone's head was turned in this way; the uncontrolled lust of debauchees found vent in secret bacchanalian associations and orgies, wherein many, with or without masquerade, played the part of Satan; shameful deeds were perpetrated by excited women and by procuresses and prostitutes ready for any kind of immoral abomination; add to these sexual orgies the most widely diffused web of a completely developed theory of witchcraft, and the systematic strengthening of the widely prevalent belief in the devil—all these things, woven in a labyrinthine connection, made it possible for thousands upon thousands to be murdered by a disordered justice and to be sacrificed to delusion."*

To those who look closely into the subject of medieval witchcraft the presence of a strong sexual element is undeniable. When we examine contemporary accounts of the 'Sabbath,' some of which are so gross as to be unprintable, we find a portion of the proceedings

* Cited by Bloch, *Sexual Life of our Time*, p. 120. Michelet has also dealt with this matter in his vivid and picturesque work, *The Sorceress*.

tobe of a marked erotic character. The figure of Satan often enough reminds one of the pagan Priapus, and the ceremonies bear a strong resemblance to the ancient ones, with the mixture of Christian language and symbolism inevitable under such circumstances. Promiscuous intercourse between the sexes was said to occur at the witches' gatherings; and, indeed, unless some sort of sexual extravagance occurred, it is hard to account for both the persistency of the gatherings and of the reports concerning them. The most probable theory is, as I have just said, that these gatherings were covers for a continuance of the older sex worship. Many customs connected therewith lingered on in the Church itself, and it is not a wild assumption that they existed in a less adulterated and more extravagant form outside.

Universal as the belief in witchcraft has been, it was not until the close of the fifteenth century that it assumed what may be justly called an epidemic form. The famous Bull of Pope Innocent VIII. was not unconnected in its origin with the growth of heresy. This precious document, issued in 1484, declares:—

"It has come to our ears that very many persons of both sexes, deviating from the Catholic Faith, abuse themselves with demons, Incubus and Succubus; and by incantations, charms, and conjurations, and other wicked superstitions, by criminal acts and offences, have caused the offspring of women and of the lower animals, the fruits of the earth, the grape, and the products of various plants, men, women, and other animals of different kinds, vineyards, meadows, pasture land, corn and other vegetables of the earth, to perish, be oppressed, and utterly destroyed; that they torture

men and women with cruel pains and torments, internal as well as external; that they hinder the proper intercourse of the sexes, and the propagation of the human species. Moreover, they are in the habit of denying the very faith itself. We, therefore, willing to provide by opportune remedies, according as it falls to our office, by our apostolical authority, by the tenor of these presents, do appoint and decree that they be convicted, imprisoned, punished, and mulcted according to their offences."

It was this Pope who commissioned the inquisitor, Sprenger, to root out witches. Sprenger, with two others, acting on the authority of the Popes, drew up the famous work, *The Witch Hammer*, which provided the basis for all subsequent works on the detection and punishment of witches.* The folly and iniquity of the book is almost unbelievable, although it is quite matched by subsequent productions. It even provides for the silence of people under torture. If they confess when tortured, the case is complete. But if they do not confess, this diabolic production lays it down that this is because witches who have given themselves up to the devil are insensible to pain. Even the evidence of children was admitted. And although in ordinary trials the evidence of criminals was barred, it was to be freely allowed in trials for sorcery. Everything that ingenuity could suggest or brutality execute was provided for.

From the issue of *The Witch Hammer* until the middle of the seventeenth century, a period of about one hundred and fifty years, an epidemic of witchcraft

* A lengthy account of this work is given by Enenmoser in his *History of Magic*, vol. ii.

raged. People of all ages and of all classes of society became implicated, and for some time, at least, accusation meant conviction. An almost unbelievably large number were executed. Says Lecky:—

"In almost every province of Germany, but especially in those where clerical influence predominated, the persecution raged with a fearful intensity. Seven thousand witches are said to have been burned at Trèves, six hundred by a single bishop in Bamberg, and nine hundred in a single year in the bishopric of Würzburg.... At Toulouse, the seat of the Inquisition, four hundred persons perished for sorcery at a single execution, and fifty at Douay in a single year. Remy, a judge of Nancy, boasted that he put to death eight hundred witches in sixteen years.... In Italy, a thousand persons were executed in a single year in the province of Como; and in other parts of the country the severity of the inquisitors at last created an absolute rebellion.... In Geneva, which was then ruled by a bishop, five hundred alleged witches were executed in three months; forty-eight were burned at Constance or Ravensburg, and eighty in the little town of Valery in Saxony. In 1670, seventy persons were condemned in Sweden, and a large proportion of them burnt."*

In England, from 1603 to 1680, it is estimated that seventy thousand persons were put to death for sorcery.† Grey, the editor of *Hudibras*, says that he had himself seen a list of three thousand who were put to death during the Long Parliament. The celebrated witch-finder, Mathew Hopkins, hung sixty in one year in the county of Suffolk. In Scotland, for thirty-nine

* *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, i. pp. 3–6.

† A. Williams, *The Superstition of Witchcraft*, p. 214.

years, the number killed annually averaged about two hundred. This, of course, does not take into account the number who were hounded to death by persecution of a popular kind, or whose lives were made so wearisome that death must have come as a release. But the most remarkable, and the most horrible, of witchcraft executions occurred in Würzburg in February 1629. No less than one hundred and sixty-two witches were burned in a succession of *autos-da-fé*. Among these, the reports disclose that there were actually thirty-four children. The following details give the actual ages of some of them:—

Burning.	Number.	Children.
7th	7	1 Girl, aged 12.
13th	4	1 Girl of 10 and another.
15th	2	1 Boy of 12.
18th	6	2 Boys of 10, girl of 14.
19th	6	2 Boys, 10 and 12.
20th	6	2 Boys.
23rd	9	3 Boys, 9, 10, and 14.
24th	7	2 Boys, brought from hospital.
26th	8	Little boy and girl.
27th	7	2 Boys, 8 and 9.
28th	6	Blind girl and infant.*

The vast majority of those executed for sorcery were women. At all times witches have been more numerous than wizards, owing to their assumed closer connection with the world of supernatural beings. It was said, "For one sorcerer, ten thousand sorceresses," and Christian writers were ready to explain why. Woman had a greater affinity with the devil from the

* T. Wright, *History of Sorcery and Magic.*

outset. It was through woman that Satan had seduced Adam, and it was only to be expected that he would employ the same instrument on subsequent occasions. *The Witch Hammer* has a special chapter devoted to the consideration of why women are more given to sorcery than men, and quotes freely from the Fathers to prove that this follows from her nature. James I. in his *Demonologia* follows Sprenger in accounting for the number of witches. "The reason is easy. For as that sex is frailer than man is, so it is easier to be entrapped in the gross snares of the devil, as was overwell proved to be true by the serpent's deceiving of Eve at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with the sex sensine." To be old, or ugly, or unpopular, to have any peculiar deformity or mark, was to invite persecution, and, in an overwhelming majority of instances, conviction followed accusation.

It is a significant comment upon the popular belief that Protestantism, as a form of religious belief, was the product of an enlightened rational life, that it was only with the advance of Protestantism that the belief in witchcraft assumed an epidemic form. This may be partly due to the greater direct dependence upon the Bible, in which satanic influence—particularly in the New Testament—plays so large a part. In the Roman Church, exorcism remained a regular part of the functions of the priest; the Church was filled with accounts of satanic conflicts, but diabolic intercourse seems to have been mainly limited to saintly characters and priests. Protestantism which, theoretically, made every man his own priest, raised the belief in satanic agency to an obsession. And wherever Protestantism established itself there was an immediate

and marked increase in the number of cases of witchcraft. In England, if we omit a doubtful law of the tenth century, there existed no regular law against witchcraft until 1541. It remained a purely ecclesiastical offence. Seventeen years later, the year of Elizabeth's accession, Bishop Jewell, preaching before the Queen, drew attention to the increase of sorcery. "It may please Your Grace," he said, "to understand that witches and sorcerers, within these last few years, are marvellously increased within Your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even to the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their senses are bereft. I pray God they never practise further than upon the subject." And he added, "These eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness." A measure was passed through Parliament the same year, making enchantments and witchcraft felony. The first year of James I. saw the passing of the 'Witch Act,' under which subsequent executions took place, and which remained in force until nearly the middle of the eighteenth century.

With scarce an exception, the leaders of Protestantism encouraged the belief in witches and urged their extermination as a religious and civil duty. With Luther, in spite of the sturdy common sense he manifested in some directions, belief in the activity of Satan amounted to an obsession. He saw Satan everywhere in everything. The devil appeared to him while writing, disturbed his rest by the rattling of pans, and prevented his pursuing his studies by hammering on his skull. When a storm arose, Luther declared, "'Tis the devil who has done this; the winds are nothing else but good or bad spirits." Suicides, he said, were often

those strangled by the devil. Moreover, "The devil can so completely assume the human form when he wants to deceive us, that we may very well lie with what seems to be a woman of real flesh and blood, and yet all the while 'tis only the devil in the shape of a woman." The devil could also become the father of children. Luther says that he knew of one such case, and added, "I would have that child thrown into the Moldau at the risk of being held its murderer."*

In America, Protestantism manifested the same influence. Of course, the settlers took the superstition of witchcraft with them, but it underwent no diminution in a new land. Increase Mather and his celebrated son, Cotton Mather, were the principal agents in stirring up the belief to frenzy point, and a commission was appointed to rout out witches and suppress their practices. There was soon a plentiful supply of victims. One woman was charged with "giving a look towards the great meeting-house of Salem, and immediately a demon entered the house and tore down part of it." It seems that a bit of the wooden wainscotting had fallen down. In the case of Giles Corey, who refused to plead guilty, torture was used. He was pressed to death, and when his tongue protruded from his mouth the sheriff thrust it back with his walking-stick. Many people were executed, and the ministers of Boston and Charlestown drew up an address warmly thanking the commission for its zeal, and expressing the hope that it would never be relaxed.

Certainly the commission did what it could to earn the thanks given. A shipmaster making for Maryland with emigrants encountered unusually rough

* Michelet, *Life of Luther*, chap. vi.

weather. An old woman, one Mary Lee, was accused of raising the storm, and drowned as a witch. A woman walked a long distance over muddy roads without soiling her dress. "I scorn to be drabbled," she said, and was hanged as a reward. George Burroughes could lift a barrel by inserting his finger in the bung-hole. He was hanged for a wizard. Bridget Bishop was charged with appearing before John Louder at midnight and grievously oppressing him. Louder's evidence against the woman also included the fact that he saw a black pig approach his door, and when he went to kick it the pig vanished. He was also tempted by a black thing with the body of a monkey, the feet of a cock, and the face of a man. On going out of his back door he saw the said Bridget Bishop going towards her house. The evidence was deemed quite conclusive. Another witness said that being in bed on the Lord's Day, he saw a woman, Susanna Martin, come in at the window and jump down on the floor. She took hold of the witness's foot, and drawing his body into a heap, lay upon him for nearly two hours, so that he could neither move nor hear. In most of these cases torture was applied, and confessions were obtained. These confessions often implicated others, but when the witches took to accusing those in high places, and even ministers of religion, the need for discrimination was realised. Once a critical judgment was aroused, the mania began to subside—Cotton Mather fighting manfully for the belief to the end.

The impetus given by Protestantism to witch-hunting in Scotland was most marked. Scotch witchcraft, says Lecky, was the offspring of Scotch Puritanism, and faithfully reflected the character of its parent.

The clergy nowhere possessed greater power, and nowhere used it more assiduously to fan the flame against witchcraft. Buckle says:—

"Of all the means of intimidation employed by the Scotch clergy, none was more efficacious than the doctrines they propounded respecting evil spirits and future punishments. On these subjects they constantly uttered the most appalling threats. The language which they used was calculated to madden men with fear, and to drive them to the depths of despair. . . . It was generally believed that the world was overrun by evil spirits, who not only went up and down the earth, but also lived in the air, and whose business it was to tempt mankind. Their number was infinite, and they were to be found in all places, and in all seasons. At their head was Satan himself, whose delight it was to appear in person, ensnaring or terrifying everyone he met. With this object he assumed various forms. One day he would visit the earth as a black dog; another day, as a raven; on another, he would be heard in the distance roaring like a bull. He appeared sometimes as a white man in black clothes, and sometimes he appeared as a black man in black clothes, when it was remarked that his voice was ghostly, and that one of his feet was cloven. His stratagems were endless. For, in the opinion of divines, his cunning increased with his age, and, having been studying for more than 5000 years, he had now attained to unexampled dexterity."*

Witchcraft was declared by the Scotch Parliament in 1563 to be punishable by death. And, naturally, the more zealous and active the search for witches,

* *History of Civilisation*, chap. xix.

the more numerous they became. In the search the clergy and the kirk-sessions led the way. In 1587 the General Assembly, having before them a case of witchcraft in which the evidence was insufficient, deputed James Melville to travel on the coast side and collect evidence in favour of the prosecution. It also ordered that the presbyteries should proceed in all severity against such magistrates as liberated convicted witches. As in England so here, a body of men came into existence whose business it was to travel the country and detect witches. Anonymous accusations were invited, the clergy "placing an empty box in church, to receive a billet with the sorcerer's name, and the date and description of his deeds."* In 1603 "at the College of Auld Abirdene" every minister was ordered to make "subtill and privie inquisition," concerning the number of witches in his parish, and report the same forthwith. Nothing that could whet the appetite for the hunt was neglected. William Johnston, baron, bailie "of the regalitie and barronie of Broughton," was awarded the goods of all who should be "lawfullie convict be assyses of notorious and common witches, haunting and resorting devilles and witches."† The lives of thousands of people were rendered unbearable, and the complaint of one, Margaret Miall, that "she desyres not to live, because nobody will converse with her, seeing she is under the reputation of a witch," must have represented the feelings of many.

It was not only for working ill that people were accused of witchcraft and executed; ill or well made little difference. In Edinburgh in 1623 it was charged

* Dalyell, *Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, p. 623.

† Dalyell, p. 628.

against Thomas Grieve that he had relieved many sicknesses and grievous diseases by sorcery and witchcraft. "He took sickness off a woman in Fife, and put it upon a cow, which thereafter ran mad and died." He also cured a child of a disease "by straiking back the hair of his head, and wrapping him in an anointed cloth, and by that means putting him asleep," and thus through his devilry and witchcraft, cured the child. Other charges of a similar kind were brought against Grieve, who was found guilty and hanged on the Castle Hill.* At the same place, a year previous, Margaret Wallace was also sentenced to be hanged and burned, on the same kind of charge, and for "practising devilry, incantation, and witchcraft, especially forbidden by the laws of Almighty God, and the municipal laws of this realm."

The following bill of costs for burning two women, Jane Wischert and Isabel Cocker, in Aberdeen, has a certain melancholy interest:—

	£	s.	d.
Item for 20 loads of Peatts to burn them	2	0	0
,, for ane boll of colles	1	4	0
,, for four tar barrells	0	6	8
,, for fir and win barrells	0	16	8
,, for a staick and the dressing of it	0	16	0
,, for four fathoms of towis	4	0	0
,, to Jon Justice for their execution	0	13	4

In England, no less than in Scotland, America, and on the Continent, much learned testimony might be cited in defence of witchcraft. The great Sir Thomas Browne said in the most famous of his writings: "For my part I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of these do not only

*Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials*, vol. iii.

deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence, a sort, not of infidels, but atheists."* Henry More, the great Platonist, asserted that they who deny the agency of witches are "puffed up with nothing but ignorance, vanity, and stupid infidelity." Ralph Cudworth, one of the greatest scholars of the latter part of the seventeenth century, said that they who denied the possibility of satanic intercourse "can hardly escape the suspicion of some hankering towards atheism."† Writing nearly a century later, when the English law merely prosecuted as rogues and vagabonds those who pretended to witchcraft, Blackstone thought it necessary to point out that this alteration did not deny the possibility of the offence, and added:—

"To deny this would be to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testaments; and the thing itself is a truth in which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony; either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws which at least suppose the possibility of a commerce with evil spirits."‡

About the same time Wesley gave the world his famous declaration on the subject:—

"It is true likewise that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many who believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them

* *Religio Medici*, pt. i. sec. 30. † *True Intellectual System*, ii. p. 650. ‡ *Commentaries*, Stephen's Edition, i. p. 238.

no such service. I take knowledge that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised and with such insolence spread through the land in direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." *

The evidence upon which the convictions for witchcraft rested were almost incredibly stupid, as the punishments were almost unbelievably brutal. If the crops failed, or the milk turned sour; if the head of a local magnate ached, or a minister of the gospel fell sick; if a woman was childless, or a child taken with a fit; if a cow sickened, or sheep died suddenly, some poor woman was pretty certain to be seized, and tortured until she confessed her alleged crime. A mole or wart on any part of the body was a sure sign of commerce with the devil. It was believed that on the body of every witch was a spot insensible to pain. To discover this she was stripped, pins were run into the body, and when excess of pain had produced numbness, some such spot was pretty certain to be found. Men regularly took up with this work in both England and Scotland, and their fame as 'prickers' depended upon the number of witches they unearthed. If a suspected witch kept a black cat, did not shed tears, or could not repeat the Lord's Prayer correctly, these were pretty sure signs of guilt. A more serious test was the ordeal by water. This was a favourite and general test, and was highly recommended by that learned fool, James the First. In this the right hand was tied to the left

* *Journal*, 1768.

foot, the left hand to the right foot. She was then thrown into a pond. If she floated she was a witch, and was either hanged or burned. If she sank, she was innocent—and was drowned. Another test was to tie a woman's legs across, and she was so seated on them that they bore the entire weight of her body. In this position she was kept for hours, and on the first sign of pain condemned as a witch.

If none of these tests were adopted, torture was used. There was the boot—a frame of iron or wood in which the leg was placed and wedges driven in until the limb was smashed. A variation of this was to place the leg in an iron boot and slowly heat it over a fire. There was the thumbscrew, an instrument which smashed the thumb to pulp by the turning of a screw. More barbarous still was the bridle. This was an iron hoop passing over the head, with four prongs, two pointing to the tongue and palate, and one to either cheek. The suspected witch was then chained to the wall, and watchers appointed to prevent her sleeping. The slightest movement caused the greatest torture, and in the vast majority of cases a confession was secured. In obstinate cases pressing between heavy stones was adopted.

One of the most famous of these witch-finders was the celebrated Mathew Hopkins before referred to. He was appointed to the work by Parliament during the time of the Commonwealth, and styled himself 'witch-finder general.' Hopkins travelled round the country, much like an assize judge, putting up at the principal inns, and at the expense of the local authorities. His charge was twenty shillings a visit, whether he found witches or not. If he discovered any, there was a further charge of twenty shillings for every witch

brought to execution. His favourite method of detection was that of floating. But another of Hopkins's tests was the following: The suspected witch was placed cross-legged on a stool in the centre of the room. She was closely watched and kept without food for four-and-twenty hours. Doors and windows remained open to watch for the entrance of some of the devil's imps. These might come in the form of a fly, a wasp, a moth, or some other insect. The work of the watchers was to kill every insect that came into the room. But if one escaped, it was clear proof that this was one of the witch's familiars.

Wherever Hopkins travelled numerous convictions followed. These were so numerous that suspicion was aroused, not of the genuineness of the convictions, but of Hopkins's knowledge concerning the locality of the witches. In defence he published in 1647 a tract entitled "The Discovery of Witches; in answer to several Queries lately delivered to the Judge of Assize for the County of Norfolk; and now published by Mathew Hopkins, Witchfinder, for the benefit of the whole Kingdom." The charge against Hopkins was that he had been supplied by the devil with a memorandum of all the witches, and so was able to find them where others failed. Absurd as the charge was, it found credence, and although his end is wrapped in obscurity, it is said that he was finally seized himself on a charge of sorcery, tried by his own favourite water test—and floated. One cannot but hope that tradition is in this case trustworthy.

It is difficult, nowadays, to realise the gravity with which these trials were undertaken. An outline of a very famous witch trial, before an eminent judge in the

latter part of the seventeenth century, will best serve as an illustration. Before me there lies a little tract of some sixty pages, printed "for William Shrewsbury at the Bible in Duck Lane," and bearing on the title page the following description:—

"At the Assizes and general gaol delivery, held at Bury St. Edmunds for the County of Suffolk, the Tenth day of March, in the Sixteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign, Lord King Charles II., before Mathew Hale, Knight, Lord Chief Baron of His Majesties Court of Exchequer; Rose Callender and Amy Duny, Widows, both of Leystoff, in the county aforesaid, were severally indicted for bewitching Elizabeth and Anne Durent, Jane Bocking, Susan Chandler, William Durent, Elizabeth and Deborah Tacy and the said Callender and Duny, being arrainged upon the same indictments, pleaded not guilty; and afterwards upon a long evidence, were found guilty, and thereupon had judgment to dye for the same."

Both the women charged were old. The charges were as follows: The mother of the infant, William Durent, sworn and examined in open court, deposed that about the 10th of March, having special occasion to go from home, left her child in the care of Amy Duny, giving her special occasion not to give her child the breast. Nevertheless, Amy Duny did acquaint her mother on her return that she had given the child the breast, and on being reprimanded "used many high expressions and threatening speeches towards her; telling her that she had as good have done otherwise than to have found fault with her . . . and that very night her son fell into strange fits of swounding . . . and so continued for several weeks." Much troubled, the

mother consulted a Dr. Jacob, of Yarmouth, who advised her to hang up the child's blanket, at night to wrap the child in it, and if she found anything therein to throw it in the fire. A very large toad was found, which on being put in the fire "made a great and horrible noise, and after a space there was a flashing in the fire like gunpowder . . . and thereupon the toad was no more seen or heard." More wonderful still, "the next day there came a young woman and told this deponnent that her aunt (meaning the said Amy) was in a most lamentable condition, having her face all scorched with fire." And on the mother enquiring of Amy Duny how this had happened, Amy replied, "she might thank her for it, for that she was the cause thereof, but that she should live to see some of her children dead, or else upon crutches." It was further alleged "that not long after this deponnent was taken with lameness in both her legges, from the knees downwards, and that she was fain to go upon crutches . . . and so continued till the time of the Assizes, that the witch came to be tried."

Concerning the bewitching of Elizabeth and Deborah Tacy, aged eleven and nine, their father declared that Deborah was suddenly taken with lameness. One day while the girl was resting outside the house, "Amy Duny came to the deponnent's house to buy some herrings; but, being denied, she went away discontented. . . . But at the very same instant of time, the said child was taken with most violent fits, feeling extreme pain in her stomach, like the pricking of pins, and shrieking out in a dreadful manner like unto a whelp." As the result of this and other ailments from which the child suffered, the father accused Amy Duny of being a

witch, and she was placed in the stocks. Being placed in the stocks, further threats were uttered, and both children were afflicted with fits. Upon recovery they "would cough extremely, and bring up much phlegm and crooked pins, and one time a twopenny nail with a very broad head; which pins (amounting to forty or more), together with the twopenny nail, were produced in court, with the affirmation of the said deponnent that he was present when the said nail was vomited up, and also most of the pins... In this manner the said children continued for the space of two months, during which time, in their intervals, this deponnent would cause them to read some chapters from the New Testament. Whereupon he observed that they would read till they came to the name of Lord or Jesus or Christ, and then, before they could pronounce either of the said words, they would suddenly fall into their fits. But when they came to the name of Satan or Devil, they would clap their fingers upon the book, crying out, 'This bites, but makes me speak right well!'"

Much more evidence of a similar kind was offered during the course of the trial, with details of a too indelicate character for reproduction concerning the search made on the women's bodies for devil's marks. During the whole of the trial there were present in court a number of distinguished people, amongst them Sir Thomas Browne. The latter, being "desired to give his opinion, what he did conceive of him; was clearly of opinion that the persons were bewitched, and said that in Denmark there had lately been a great discovery of witches, who used the very same way of afflicting persons, by conveying pins into them, and crooked as these pins were, with needles and nails. And his

opinion was that the devil in such cases did work upon the bodies of men and women as on a natural foundation, to stir up and excite such humours superabounding in their bodies to a great excess, whereby he did in an extraordinary manner afflict them with such distempers as their bodies were most subject to, as particularly appeared in these children."

Sir Mathew Hale, one of the greatest lawyers of his day, in directing the jury, told them "he would not repeat the evidence unto them, lest by so doing he should wrong the evidence one way or the other. Only this acquainted them. First, whether or no these children were bewitched? Secondly, whether the prisoners at the bar were guilty of it? That there were such creatures he made no doubt at all. For, first, the Scriptures had affirmed as much. Secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime. And such had been the judgment of this kingdom, as appears by that Act of Parliament which had provided punishments proportionable to the quality of the offence. And desired them strictly to observe their evidence, and desired the great God of Heaven to direct their hearts in this weighty thing they had in hand; for to condemn the innocent and let the guilty go free were both an abomination before the Lord." The jury took no more than half an hour to consider their verdict, and brought in both women guilty upon all counts. The judge expressed his complete satisfaction with the verdict, and sentenced them to be hanged—a sentence duly carried out a fortnight later.

This is the last notable trial in English history. A

witch was burned later than the date of this trial, and the last one actually condemned was in 1712. But in this case, on the representation of the judge who tried the issue, the verdict was formally set aside. By that time people were beginning to realise the wisdom of Montaigne's counsel, written at the commencement of the witch epidemic:—

"How much more natural and more likely do I find it that two men should lie than one in twelve hours should pass with the winds from east to west? How much more natural that our understanding may, by the volubility of our loose, capering mind, be transported from its place than one of us should, flesh and bones as we are, by a strange spirit be carried upon a broom through a tunnel or a chimney."

In England the Witch Act of 1604 was not formally repealed until 1736. In Scotland the last witch legally executed was in 1722. Captain Ross, Sheriff of Sutherland, has the doubtful honour of having condemned her to the stake. But fifty years later than this—1773—the Associated Presbytery passed a resolution deploring the fact that witchcraft was falling into disrepute. In Germany the last witch was executed in 1749, by decapitation. The last trial for witchcraft in Massachusetts was as late as 1793. These dates refer, of course, to legal proceedings. Examples of the existence of this belief are continually being recorded in newspapers, although they now only rank as solitary reminiscences of one of the most degrading and brutalising beliefs that European history records.

I have not aimed at giving a history of the witch mania—indeed, a scientific history of witchcraft, one that will make plain the nature of the various factors

involved, has yet to be written. I have only dwelt upon it for the purpose of enforcing the lesson of how materially such an epidemic must have contributed to give permanence to religious belief in general. It is certain that such an epidemic could not occur save in a society saturated with supernaturalism. It is equally certain that once such an epidemic occurs it must in turn strengthen the tendency towards supernaturalistic beliefs. Thanks to the long reign of the religious idea, and to the overwhelming influence of the Church, the people of Europe were prepared for such an outbreak. And it should be clear that the prevalence of such beliefs, even though they may be afterwards discarded, favours the perpetuation of religious belief as a whole. The particular form of a belief that is prevalent for a time may disappear, but the temper of mind induced by its reign remains. And absurd as the belief in witches capering through the air on broomsticks, changing themselves into black cats, raising storms, and causing sickness—absurd though all this may be, it yet serves to keep alive the temper of mind on which supernaturalism lives.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

THE STUDY OF RELIGION FALLS NATURally and easily into two parts. The first is a question of origin. Under what conditions did the hypothesis that supernatural beings control the life of man come into existence? We know that in civilised times religious beliefs are in the nature of an inheritance. A member of any civilised society finds them here when he is born, he grows up with them, generally accepting them without question, or effecting certain modifications in the form in which he continues to hold them. If we treat religion as a hypothesis, advanced as other hypotheses are advanced, to account for a certain class of facts, then we can safely say that religion is one of the earliest in the history of human thought. And its antiquity and universality preclude us from seeking an explanation of its origin in the mental life of civilised humanity. Whether the religious hypothesis can or cannot be justified by an appeal to civilised intelligence, it is plain it did not begin there. Its beginnings are earlier than any existing civilisation; and in its most general form may be said to be as old as mankind itself. Consequently, if any satisfactory explanation of the origin of the religious idea is to be found, it must be sought amid the very earliest conditions of human society.

Now whatever the differences of opinion concerning matters of detail, there is substantial agreement amongst European anthropologists upon one important point. They all agree that the conception of supernatural, or 'spiritual,' beings owes its beginning to the ignorance of primitive man concerning both his own nature and the nature of the world around him. The

beginnings of human experience suggest questions that can only be satisfactorily answered by the accumulated experience of many generations. These questions do not materially differ from those that face men to-day. The why and wherefore of things are always with us; life propounds the same problem to all; it is the replies alone that vary, and the nature of these replies is determined by the knowledge at our disposal. The difference is not in nature but in man. The answers given by primitive man to these eternal questions are a complete inversion of those of his better informed descendants. The conception of natural force, of mechanical necessity, is as yet unborn, and the primitive thinker everywhere assumes the operation of personal beings as responsible for all that occurs. This is not so much the product of careful and elaborate philosophising, it is closer akin to the *naive* thinking of a child concerning a thunderstorm. Primitive thought accepts the universal operation of living and intelligent forces as an unquestionable fact. Modern thought tends more and more surely in the direction of regarding the universe as a complex of self-adjusting, non-conscious forces. Primitive thought assumes a supernatural agency as the cause of disease, and seeks, logically, to placate it by prayer or coerce it by magic. Modern thought turns to test-tube and microscope, searches for the malignant germ, and manufactures an antitoxin. The history of human thought is, as Huxley said, a record of the substitution of mechanical for vitalistic processes. The beginning of religion is found in connection with the latter. A genuine science commences with the emergence of the former.

With this aspect of the matter I have not, however, been specially concerned. It has been left on one side in order to concentrate attention upon another and a more neglected aspect of the subject—that of the conditions that have served to perpetuate the religious idea. Grant, what cannot be well denied in the face of modern investigation, that ideas of the supernatural began in primitive delusion. How comes it that this idea has not by now disappeared from civilised society? What are the causes that have given it such a lengthy lease of life? Experience has shown that all really verifiable knowledge counts as an asset of naturalism, and is so far opposed to supernaturalism. Moreover, the history of science has been such that one feels justified in the assumption that, given time and industry, there are no phenomena that are not susceptible to a naturalistic explanation. Why, then, has not supernaturalism died out? Even the religious idea cannot persist without evidence of some kind being offered in its behalf. This evidence may be to a better instructed mind inconclusive or irrelevant, but evidence of some sort there must have been all along, and must still be. Granted that the religious idea began with primitive mankind, granted also that it was based on a mistaken interpretation of natural phenomena, these reasons are quite insufficient to explain why thousands of generations later that idea is still with us. "Our fathers have told us" offers to the average mind a strong appeal, but surely the children will require some further proof than this. What kind of evidence is it that throughout the ages religious people have accepted as conclusive? A study of primitive psychology shows clearly enough how the religious idea vitalised

the facts. What we next have to discern is the class of facts that have kept the religious idea alive.

The foregoing pages constitute an attempt to answer this question. The need for some such investigation was clearly shown by the publication of the late Professor William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and its reception by the religious press of the country as an epoch-marking work. As a mere collection of documents, the work is interesting enough. But its critical value is extremely small. How religious visionaries have felt, or what has been their experiences, can only furnish the mere data of an enquiry, and *their explanation of the cause of their experiences is a part of the data.* This, apparently, Professor James overlooked; and it will be noted by critical readers of his book that it proceeds on the assumption that the statements of religious visionaries are to be taken, not only as true concerning their subjective experiences at a given time, but also as approximately true as to the causes of their mental states. This, of course, by no means follows. A scientific enquiry cannot separate mental conditions from the subject's interpretation of their causation. Whether this interpretation is genuine or not must be decided finally by an appeal to what is known of the laws of mental life, under both normal and abnormal conditions. If these are adequate to explain the "Varieties of Religious Experience," there is no need whatever to assume the operation of a supernatural agency. Nor does calling this agency 'transcendent' or 'supermundane' make any substantial difference. For, in this connection, these are only names that serve to disguise a visitant of a highly undesirable character.

The evidence on behalf of a naturalistic explanation of religious phenomena has been purposely stated in a suggestive rather than in an exhaustive manner. The main lines of evidence are threefold. First, there is the indisputable fact that in the lower stages of culture all mental and bodily diseases are universally attributed to spiritual agency. This explanation holds the field; it is the only one possible at the time, and it is not replaced until a comparatively late stage of human history. But of special importance is the fact that a belief does not die out suddenly. It is only destroyed very slowly, and even after the facts upon which the belief was originally based have been otherwise interpreted, the attitude of mind engendered by the long reign of a belief remains. It has by that time become part of the intellectual environment. Theories of a quasi-philosophic or quasi-scientific character are elaborated, and give to the original belief something of a rational air. Even to-day the extent to which superstitious practices still gather round the subject of disease is known only to the curious in such matters. Not that the original reason is given for the practice. In nearly every case a different one is invented. To take only a single example. We still find saffron tea largely used in cases of measles. All medical men are aware that it possesses not the slightest curative value. Students of folklore are aware that it has its origin in the theory of sympathetic cures. Its redeeming feature is that it is harmless; so we find it still in common use, and the recovery of a child from measles is often enough attributed to the potency of the concoction. So with the relation of disease to the persistence of the belief in the supernatural. The conclusion that dis-

ease—whether bodily or mental—is due to the agency of spirits is one that follows from the existence of the religious idea; but in turn the observed facts react and strengthen the religious belief. Every case of disease becomes to the primitive mind an unanswerable proof in favour of the original hypothesis. The disease is there, and the only explanation possible is in terms of the animistic idea. And all the time the religious idea is becoming more deeply embedded in the social consciousness, more firmly established as a social fact.

The next line of evidence is that furnished by what I have called the culture of the supernatural. By some means or other—probably by accident in the first instance—it is discovered that certain herbs and vegetable drugs have a peculiar effect on one's mental state. Those who use them see or hear things other people do not normally hear or see. Abstention from food and other bodily privations produce similar results. What is the inevitable conclusion? The only one possible under the existing conditions is that communication has been set up with an invisible world from which one is shut off under normal conditions. From this to the next step is obvious and easy. If a drug, or a fast, brings one into communication with the supernatural world, one has only to repeat the conditions in order to repeat the experience. And repeated they are in all religions, with, at most, those modifications induced by changed times and circumstances. This is why fasting and other forms of 'fleshly mortification' play so large a part in the history of religion. The savage medicine man, the Hindu fakir, the medieval saint, all create their ecstasies by the simple plan of disturbing the normal operations of the nervous

system. It is not, of course, implied that this is done with a full consciousness of all that is involved in the practice. The derangement is to them the condition of the supernatural manifestation, not the physiological and psychological cause of the experience.

The third main line of evidence is connected with the phenomena of sexuality. It has been shown that in early stages of culture man everywhere connects the phenomena of the sexual life with the activity of supernatural forces. Following the lines of investigation indicated by Mr. Sidney Hartland, we saw reason to believe that the primitive conception of procreation is not that afterwards prevalent, but that of assuming the birth of a child to be due to the direct action of spiritual beings on the mother. Proofs of this are found in existing beliefs among primitive peoples, in the magical practices so widely current to obtain children, and in numerous other customs connected with childbirth. The phenomenon of puberty in the male and of menstruation in the female gives a terrifying reality to this belief. But still more important is the fact that a great deal of assumed religious feeling is found on analysis to be little more than masked sexuality. The connection between eroticism and piety has been noted over and over again by medical observers in the cases that have been brought professionally under their notice. And it is hardly less marked in a large number of instances that are usually classed as normal. Thus great religious teachers have often emphasised the value of a celibate life as a means of furthering religious devotion, and nearly all have treated it with marked respect. The reason given for this is that marriage involves a greater absorption in material or worldly

cares, while celibacy leaves one free to full devotion to the spiritual. But the bottom reason for it is that sexual and domestic feelings, lacking their proper outlet in marriage and family life, run with greater force in the outlet provided by religion. So it happens that we find unmarried men and women, devoted to the religious life, expressing themselves towards Jesus or the Virgin in language which, separated from its religious associations, leaves no doubt as to its origin in unsatisfied sexual feeling. In these cases we are dealing with a perversion of one of the deepest of human instincts. And it is one of the commonest of observations in psychology that when a feeling is denied outlet through its proper channel it finds vent in some other direction, and is to that extent masked or disguised.

Allied to the fact of perversion is that of misinterpretation. In the chapter on *Conversion* we have seen how largely this occurs at the period of adolescence. The significant features of adolescence are a development of the sexual nature and an awakening of a consciousness of race kinship. Connected with these, and flowing from them, is a more or less rapid development of what are called the altruistic feelings, the individual becoming less self-centred and more concerned for the well-being of others. From an evolutionary point it is easy to read the fundamental meaning of these transformations, although in the course of social development they have become overlaid with a number of secondary characteristics. Still, in a completely rationalised social life, with adequate knowledge concerning the nature of adolescence, every care would be taken to direct these developing energies into

purely social channels. Adolescence is the great formative period; it is then that imitation and suggestion play their most important parts, and it is then that the foundations may be laid of a really good and useful citizenship. If we fail then, we fail completely.

In a society where supernaturalism still exerts considerable power another, and a more disastrous, policy is pursued. Every endeavour is made by religious organisations to exploit adolescence in their own interest. Thousands of priests, often, no doubt, with the best of motives, are engaged in impressing upon the youthful mind an entirely erroneous notion of the character and the direction of the feelings experienced. The sense of restlessness, consequent upon a period of great physiological disturbance, is utilised to create an unhealthy 'conviction of sin,' or the need of 'getting right with God.' Social duties and obligations are made incidental rather than fundamental. Activities that should be consciously directed to a social end are diverted into religious channels, and one consequence of this, as we have seen, is a large crop of nervous disorders that might be avoided were a healthier outlet provided. In this the modern priest is acting precisely as his savage forerunner acted. As the savage medicine man associates sexual phenomena with the activity of the tribal ghosts, so the modern priest often associates the psychological conditions that accompany adolescence with a supernatural influence. The distinction between the two is a purely verbal one. In neither case is there a recognition of the nature of the processes actually at work; in both cases the phenomena are used to emphasise the reality and activity of the supernatural. In both cases the

social feelings are disguised by the religious interpretation given, with the result that instead of adolescence being, as it should be, the period of a conscious entry into the larger social life, it only too often marks the beginning of a lifelong servitude to retrogressive forces.

These are the main lines along which, I conceive, the study of the pathologic elements that enter into the history of religion must be studied. And so long as we restrict our study to the lower culture stages the evidence is clear and unmistakable. It is when we reach the higher stages of civilisation that the problem becomes more difficult. For although it is possible to detect the same factors at work they are expressed in a different way, and affiliated to current philosophic and even scientific ideas. Thus, it would be readily admitted by most people nowadays that visions seen by a fasting man, or by a taker of drugs, or by one suffering from some nervous disorder, were wholly inadmissible as evidence. So far we have advanced beyond the point of view of primitive races. But the testimony of one who by constantly dwelling upon a single idea, and by excluding rational and corrective influences, has brought about a quite abnormal state of mind, is still counted of value by theologians. Much of the current cant concerning 'mysticism' may be cited in illustration of this. Exactly what mysticism is no one appears to know. Definitions are numerous and varied. So far as most mystics are concerned the definition of Harnack—"Mysticism is rationalism applied to a sphere beyond reason"—appears to hit the mark, although how reason can be used in a sphere to which it does not apply is precisely one of those un-

intelligible statements that so delights those with yearnings after the ineffable. The normal mind will probably find more satisfaction in John Stuart Mill's description of mysticism as being "neither more nor less than ascribing objective existence to the subjective creations of the mind, and believing that by watching and contemplating these ideas of its own making, it can read what takes place in the world without."

But the general claim of 'mystics,' and, indeed, of supernaturalists generally, is that they are, in virtue of the exercise of certain qualities or 'faculties,' either inoperative at certain times, or absent in the case of normal folk, able to perceive a truth not perceptible to people less fortunately endowed. And these claims, I have no hesitation in saying, are wholly false. There are all degrees of development of human faculty, but it is substantially the same with all. There is no royal road to truth in this direction more than in others. Truth is reached in the same way by all, and although an induction may in the case of certain well-dowered individuals be so rapid as to rank as an 'intuition,' a careful analysis destroys the illusion.

When we clear away from the claims of the 'mystic' all the superfluities of language that are there, and so reduce these claims to their lowest and plainest terms, we find ourselves face to face with the claim of the supernaturalist as it has existed from savage times onward. The method remains true to itself. In the first instance, we have the claim to illumination based upon direct interference with the normal workings of the mind. In the next stage, we find this interference still marked, but less direct. Finally, we have the unhealthy operation of fixed ideas, and the exclusion of all con-

ditions that would prevent the operation of hallucination or illusion. But the method remains the same throughout, and it is equally sterile throughout. In all history these mystical states of illumination have discovered no verifiable truth; they have never at any time advanced human knowledge in the smallest degree. And the reason for this is plain. The brain of the mystic, like that of the non-mystic, can only work on the basis of its acquired knowledge or experience. It can create nothing new; it can declare no truth that is not in the nature of an induction from existing knowledge. All that the religious mystic can accomplish after brooding upon inherited religious beliefs is to create new combinations, or effect certain modifications or developments of them, and by continued contemplation endow his subjective creations with an objective existence. That is why the Christian mystic remains a Christian. The Mohammedan mystic remains a Mohammedan. The 'supersensible reality' is always of the kind consonant with their inherited beliefs and their social environment. That is also why mysticism has its fashions like all other forms of religious extravagance. And as he is "applying rationalism to a sphere above reason," the mystic may give full vent to his imaginative powers. That which is above reason may defy reasonable disproof. To some, however, it has the disadvantage of not admitting of reasonable verification. There is nothing here but the primitive delusion operating under changed conditions.

In addition to the lines of investigation followed in the foregoing pages, a great deal might be said as to how far the religious idea has been perpetuated by an

exploitation of purely social qualities. It must be obvious to even the cursory student that a great deal of what is now being put forward as religious is really no more than a sociology with a religious label. The feeling for truth, beauty, justice, the desire for social intercourse, are all treated as expressions of religious conviction. All sorts of social reforms are urged in the name of religion, and the degree of success achieved dwelt upon as fruits of the religious spirit. But in no legitimate sense of the word can these things be called religious. They may or may not be consonant with the existing religion, but in themselves they are very clearly the outcome of man's social nature, and would exist even though religion disappeared entirely. The appeals made to man's moral sense, to his sense of justice, to his sympathies, are thus fundamentally appeals made to his social nature, and so far as the religious appeal is placed upon this basis it becomes an exploitation of the social consciousness. Unfortunately, the long association of religious forms with social life and institutions, due ultimately to the immense power of supernaturalism in early society, this, combined with early education, makes it a matter of no small difficulty for the average man or woman to separate the two things.

Finally, let us imagine for a moment that the course of human history had been different to what it actually has been. Suppose that by some miracle humanity had started its career in full possession of that knowledge of nature which has been so laboriously accumulated. In that case, would the belief in the supernatural have ever existed? Would the thousand and one 'spiritual beings' of primitive society have ever had being?

And if not called into being then, from what other source could they have been derived? Is there anything in later scientific knowledge that would ever have suggested the supernatural? We know there is not; we know that the whole of modern science is an emphatic protest against its existence. Unfortunately the scientist does not come first, but last; and by the time he appears, the supernatural has made good its foothold; it has permeated human institutions, and has bitten so deeply into habits of thought as to make its eradication the most difficult of all tasks.

Let us carry our imagining yet a step further. Imagine that even after primitive ignorance had created the supernatural, it had come to an abrupt stop when man had emerged from the purely savage stage. Suppose a generation born, not without knowledge of what their progenitors believed, but with a sufficient knowledge of their own to correct their ancestor's errors. Suppose that generation in a position to recognise disease, insanity, delusion, hysteria, hallucination for what they are. Assume them to be under no delusion concerning the nature of man, physically or mentally. Would the religious idea have persisted in the way that it has done? Granted religion would still have continued to exist as an ultimate philosophy of nature that appealed to some minds, as other systems of philosophy number their disciples, would it have been the dominating power it has been? What under such conditions would have become of that evidence for the supernatural, accepted generation after generation, but which is now rejected by all educated minds? Where would have been that long array of seers, prophets, illuminants, whose credentials have been found

in states of mind that are now seen to have been pathological in character? For remember it was not always—very seldom, in fact—the justice, or the reasonableness of the teachings set forth, that won support, but generally the 'signs and wonders' that were pointed to as evidence of the divine commission of the teachers. Assume, then, that these 'signs and wonders' had been wanting, and that for thousands of years people had looked at natural phenomena from the point of view of the educated mind of to-day, what would have been the present position of the religious idea? Would it not have been like a tree divorced from the soil?

Well, we know that the course of history has been far different from what I have assumed to be the case. We know that the savage dies out very slowly, and that even in civilised States to-day he is honoured in the existence of a whole army of representatives. Each generation moves along the road marked out by its predecessors, and broadens or lengthens it to but a small extent. For many, many generations people went on adopting the conclusions of the savage concerning man and the universe, and finding proofs of the soundness of those conclusions in exactly the same kind of experiences. The beliefs thus engendered were wild and absurd—admittedly so, and many of such a nature that educated people are now ashamed of them. But such as they were, they served the purpose of perpetuating the belief in the supernatural, and so served to strengthen the general religious idea. Of that there can be no reasonable doubt. For the influence of beliefs that have been long held does not end with the intellectual perception of their falsity. A belief such

as witchcraft dies out, but by that time it has done its work in familiarising the general mind with the reality of the supernatural, and so prepares the ground for other harvests. These long centuries of superstitious beliefs have left behind in society a psychological residuum that is at all times an obstacle and is sometimes fatal to scientific thinking. We are like men who have obtained freedom after almost a lifetime of slavery. We may be no longer in any real danger of the lash, but fear of the whip has become part of our nature, and we shrink without cause. So with all those now admitted delusions that have been described in the foregoing pages, and which for generations were asserted without question. They bit deeply into social institutions; the temper of mind they induced became part of our social heritage. They perpetuated the long reign of supernaturalism, and still interpose a serious obstacle to sane and helpful conceptions of man and the universe.

INDEX

Adolescence and Religion, 177–8, 181, 276–7.
Adolescence and Primitive Customs, 178.
Adolescence and Nervous Disorders, 196–7.
Adolescence, Social Significance of, 183–5.
Agapæ, 152.
Asceticism, 121, 125, 146, 208–13.
Asceticism and Purity, 213.
Asceticism, Influence on Religion, 224–5.
Augustine, 157.
Authority, Conflict with Science, viii.

Baring-Gould, S., 147, 153, 209.
Baring-Gould, S., on Mysticism and Sexualism, 125, 151.
Brinton, D. G., on Origin of Religion, 14.
Bryce, J., 232.
Buckle, T. H., 256.

Catherine of Sienna, 85, 129.
Celibacy, 214–5.
Celibacy, Results on Morals, 220–3.
Celibacy, Social Consequences of, 216–9, 220–3.
Clouston, Sir T. S., on Revivals, 195.
Clouston, Sir T. S., on the Connection between Sexualism and Religion, 140.
Conversion, Pathological Nature of, 194.
Conversion and Adolescence, 32, 176–7, 276.
Conversion, Theological Notions of, 169–71.
Conversion, Ages of Converts, 174–5, 194–5.
Conversion, Statistics of, 173–5.
Conversion and Imitation, 188.
Conversion, Social Aspects of, 200.
Convulsionnaires (The), 239.
Crowd Psychology, 206.
Crusades, Character of, 227–9.
Crusades, Children's, 230.
Crusades, Consequences of, 232–3.
Cudworth, R., 259.

Dalyell, J. G., 257.
Dancing and Religious Ecstasy, 60–1.
Dancing Epidemics, 236–40.
Death, Savage Ideas of, 44.
Demoniacs, 77.
Disease, Theory of, amongst Primitive Peoples, 46.
Disease, Theory of, amongst the Early Christians, 47.
D'Israeli, I., on Sexualism and Religion, 17, 135.
Draper, J. W., 231.
Drugs, their use in the history of Religion, 57.

Environment, 36, 38.
Environment, Nature of Primitive, 39
Epilepsy, Influence of, in fostering Supernaturalism, 74–9.
Epilepsy, Opinion of Dr. Hollander, 75.
Epilepsy, Opinion of Sir T. S. Clouston, 75.
Epilepsy, Opinion of Dr. C. Norman, 76.
Epilepsy, Opinion of Emanuel Deutsch, 77, 79.
Epilepsy in New Testament, 77.
Erotic Sects, 155–60, 165.
Eroticism and Supernaturalism, 126–8, 132, 136–9.
Evidence for the Supernatural, 2, 271.

Fasting, 61–5.
Flagellation, 234–5.
Forlong, Maj.-Gen., 109 *n.*
Fox, George, Account of Visions, 82.
Frazer, J. G., 39, 46, 97, 99, 111.

Free Love—Religious, 150, 161–4.

Galton, Francis, on Religious and Morbid States, 86.
Galton, Francis, 219.
Gibbon, E., 227.
Gowers, Sir W. R., 197.
Granger, Prof., 84, 141–3.

Hallucinations, 23–4–5, 62, 84.
Hecker, J. F. C., 236–7.
Hopkins, Mathew, 261–2.
Human Qualities, Identity of, 6.

Interpretation, Growth of Scientific, xiii.
Ireland, Dr. W. H., on Hallucinations, 23–4.

James, W., 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 81, 83, 130, 131, 145, 175–6, 272.

Kingsley, Mary, on Primitive Thought, 42.

Lea, H. C., 220–1.
Le Bon, Gustave, on Crowd Psychology, 206.
Lecky, W. E. H., 154, 212, 221.
Luther and Demonism, 25, 58, 82, 253.

Maudsley, H., on the Relation between Nervous States and Ecstasy, 66, 76, 133.
Medicine and the Church, 70–1.
Menstruation, 95–6–7–8.
Mental States, Reality of, xi, 7, 22.
Mercier, C., Connection between Sexualism and Religion, 124, 140–1, 187, 197.
Millman, H. H., 219, 222–3, 225–6, 229, 232.
Mind, Theories of, x.
Mistletoe, Origin of Kissing under, 109 *n.*
Mohammed, his Account of Inspiration, 78, 81.
Monasticism, 225.
Monasticism and the Family, 216–7, 219, 222–3.
Monasticism and Morals, 220.
Mysticism, 131, 279–80.
Mysticism and the Abnormal, 55.
Mysticism and Puberty, 186.
Mysticism, Definitions of, 278–9.
Mystics, Claims of, xi.

Opium, Effects of, 58.

Pathological States and Religious Belief, 5, 49.
Pathological Aspects of Revivals, 190–1–2–3, 201.
Pathology of Religion, Need of, 3.
Phallicism, 104–5–6–7–8–9.
Pike, L. O., on Character of Crusaders, 229.
Procreation, Primitive Beliefs concerning, 93–4.
Psychological Epidemics, 207.
Psychology, Normal and Abnormal, 3.
Psychology as a Social Force, 37–8.
Puberty, 180–6.
Puberty Customs, 62, 95, 96.

Religion, Definition of, 1.
  Association of, with Non-religious Forces, 4.
  and Intuition, 51.
  and Puberty, 180.
  and Dancing, 60–1–2.
  and Fasting, 63–4–5.
  and Environment, 199, 202.
  in Primitive Life, 40, 44–5–6, 53.
  its Connection with Pathological Conditions, 8, 14, 68–9, 70–1–2–3–4.
Religious Faculty, Fallacy of, 7, 19, 20.
Religious Idea and Modern Thought, vii.

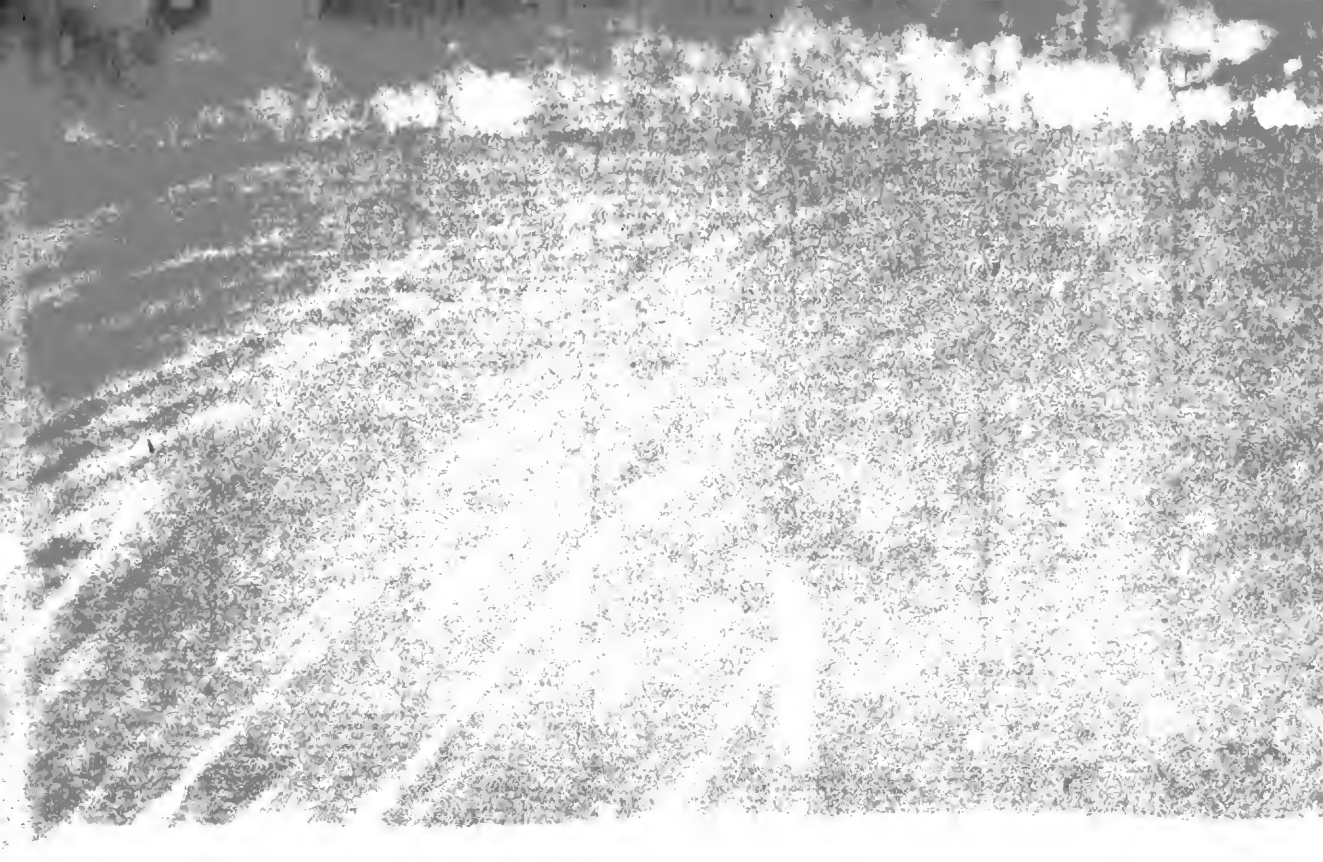
INDEX

Renan, E., 145.
Revivalistic Religion, 163, 172, 189, 190, 193, 201.
Russian Sects, 164–7.

Saints, Medical Uses of, 70.
Santa Teresa, 85.
Science, Function of, xi–xii.
Sexualism and Religious Belief, 9, 11–2, 89–90, 120, 121, 125–9, 145, 275.
Sexualism and Religious Belief, Opinion of Dr. Norman, 122; of Dr. Forel, 123; of Dr. Mercier, 124; of Dr. Kraft-Ebing, 125; of Dr. Maudsley, 133–4.
Smith, W. R., on the Meaning of 'Unclean,' 101.
Sociability, Significance of, 35.
Social Life and Religious Theories, 13, 281.
Spencer, H., 37, 46.
Spiritual Wifehood, 148–9.
Spiritualism, 53–4.
Starbuck, E. D., on Conversion, 174, 200.
Sully, J., 20.
Supernaturalism, Causes of Persistence of, 271, 273, 277, 282.
Supernaturalism, Consequences of, 283–4.
Supernaturalism, Persistence of, 2.
Suso, Austerities of, 85.
Swedenborg, E., 80.
Symonds, J. A., Experience under Chloroform, 29.

Theologians, Attitude towards Science, ix.
Thomas, W. I., 182.
Tylor, E. B., 1, 49, 54, 55, 71, 182, 193.
Unclean, Religious Significance of, 100–1.

Whittaker, T., on the Effects of Opium, 58.
Williams, A., 250.
Witchcraft, 27, 243.
  Pathology of, 246–7.
  and Christian Church, 244.
  Bull of Innocent VIII., 248.
  Extent of Epidemic, 250.
  and Sir Thomas Browne, 265.
  and Montaigne, 267.
  and Sir M. Hale, 266.
  and John Wesley, 259.
  and Luther, 253.
  and Protestantism, 252–3.
  Scottish, 255–6–7–8, 267.
  American, 254–5.
  Children burned for, 251.
  Description of Trial, 263–6.
  Legislation in England, 253, 267.
Witches, Methods of Detection, 260–1.
Witches, Number killed, 250–1.
Woman, Christian Church and, 102.
Woman, why considered religiously unclean, 103.
Woman, a Source of Spiritual Infection, 99.
Woman, Influence of Religious Beliefs in determining her Social Position, 102–3, 110–9.
Woman, Position among Primitive Peoples, 115.
Wright, T., 251.



10123

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 833 968 1

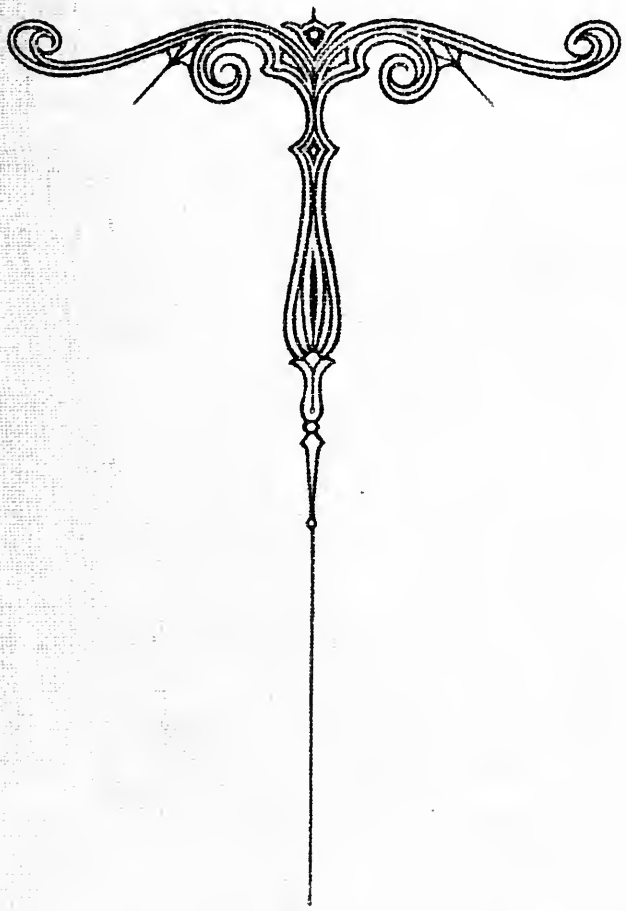
University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

OCT 06 1997

JUN 13 97 REC CL

Chapman Cohen

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT



rnia
]

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUCHT.

A Grammar of Freethought.

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

LONDON:
THE PIONEER PRESS,
61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.

1921.

The Publishers wish to express their obligation to Mr. H. Cutner for the very tasteful design which adorns the cover of this book.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Outgrowing the Gods	9
II.	Life and Mind	18
III.	What is Freethought?	37
IV.	Rebellion and Reform	51
V.	The Struggle for the Child	61
VI.	The Nature of Religion	72
VII.	The Utility of Religion	88
VIII.	Freethought and God	101
IX.	Freethought and Death	111
X.	This World and the Next	123
XI.	Evolution	134
XII.	Darwinism and Design	146
XIII.	Ancient and Modern	162
XIV.	Morality Without God.—I.	172
XV.	Morality Without God.—II.	182
XVI.	Christianity and Morality	193
XVII.	Religion and Persecution	204
XVIII.	What is to follow Religion?	223

PREFACE.

—o—

It must be left for those who read the following pages to decide how far this book lives up to its title. That it leaves many aspects of life untouched is quite clear, but there must be a limit to everything, even to the size and scope of a book; moreover, the work does not aim at being an encyclopædia, but only an outline of what may fairly be regarded as the Freethought position. Freethought, again, is too fluid a term to permit its teachings being summarized in a set creed, but it does stand for a certain definite attitude of mind in relation to those problems of life with which thoughtful men and women concern themselves. It is that mental attitude which I aim at depicting.

To those who are not directly concerned with the attack on supernaturalism it may also be a matter of regret that so much of this work is concerned with a criticism of religious beliefs. But that is an accident of the situation. We have not yet reached that stage in affairs when we can afford to let religion alone, and one may readily be excused the suspicion that those who, without believing in it, profess to do so, are more concerned with avoiding a difficult, if not dangerous, subject, than they are with the problem of developing sane and sound methods of thinking. And while some who stand forward as leaders of popular thought fail to do their part in the work of attacking supernaturalistic beliefs, others are perforce compelled to devote more time than they would otherwise to the task. That, in brief, is my apology for concerning myself so largely with religious topics, and leaving almost untouched other fields where the Freethought attitude would prove equally fruitful of results.

After all, it is the mental attitude with which one approaches a problem that really matters. The man or woman who has not learned to set mere authority on one side in dealing with any question will never be more than a mere echo, and what the world needs, now as ever, is not echoes but voices. Information, knowledge, is essential to the helpful consideration of any subject; but all the knowledge in the world will be of very little real help if it is not under the control of a right method. What is called scientific knowledge is, to-day, the commonest of acquisitions, and what most people appear to understand by that is the accumulation of a large number of positive facts which do, indeed, form the raw material of science. But the getting of mere facts is like the getting of money. The value of its accumulation depends upon the use made thereof. It is the power of generalization, the perception and application of principles that is all-important, and to this the grasp of a right method of investigation, the existence of a right mental attitude, is essential.

The world needs knowledge, but still more imperatively it needs the right use of the knowledge that is at its disposal. For this reason I have been mainly concerned in these pages with indicating what I consider to be the right mental attitude with which to approach certain fundamental questions. For, in a world so distracted by conflicting teachings as is ours, the value of a right method is almost incalculable. Scepticism, said Buckle, is not the result, but the condition of progress, and the same may be said of Freethought. The condition of social development is the realization that no institution and no teaching is beyond criticism. Criticism, rejection and modification are the means by which social progress is achieved. It is by criticism of existing ideas and institutions, by the rejection of what is incapable of improvement, and by the modification of what permits of betterment, that we show ourselves worthy of the better traditions of the past, and profitable servants of the present and the future.

C. C.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT.

——o——

CHAPTER I.

OUTGROWING THE GODS.

One of the largest facts in the history of man is religion. If it were otherwise the justification for writing the following pages, and for attempting the proof that, so far as man's history is concerned with religion, it is little better than a colossal blunder, would not be nearly so complete. Moreover, it is a generalization upon which religionists of all classes love to dwell, or even to parade as one of the strongest evidences in their favour; and it is always pleasant to be able to give your opponent all for which he asks—feeling, meanwhile, that you lose nothing in the giving. Universality of belief in religion really proves no more than the universality of telling lies. "All men are liars" is as true, or as false, as "All men are religious." For some men are not liars, and some men are not religious. All the generalization means is that some of both are found in every age and in every country, and that is true whether we are dealing with the liar or with the religious person.

What is ignored is the consideration that while at one stage of culture religious belief is the widest and most embracing of all beliefs it subsequently weakens, not quite in direct proportion to the advance of culture, but yet in such a way that one can say there is an

actual relation between a preponderance of the one and a weakening of the other. In very primitive communities gods are born and flourish with all the rank exuberance of a tropical vegetation. In less primitive times their number diminishes, and their sphere of influence becomes more and more sharply defined. The gods are still credited with the ability to do certain things, but there are other things which do somehow get done without them. How that discovery and that division are made need not detain us for the moment, but the fact is patent. Advancing civilization sees the process continued and quickened, nay, that is civilization; for until nature is rid of her "haughty lords" and man realizes that there are at least some natural forces that come within the control of his intelligence, civilization cannot really be said to have commenced. Continued advance sees the gods so diminished in power and so weakened in numbers that their very impotency is apt to breed for them the kind of pity that one feels for a millionaire who becomes a pauper, or for an autocratic monarch reduced to the level of a voteless citizen.

The truth is that all the gods, like their human creators, have in their birth the promise of death. The nature of their birth gives them life, but cannot promise them immortality. However much man commences by worshipping gods, he sooner or later turns his back upon them. Like the biblical deity he may look at his creation and declare it good, but he also resembles this deity in presently feeling the impulse to destroy what he has made. To the products of his mind man can no more give immortality than he can to the work of his hands. In many cases the work of his hands actually outlives that of his mind, for we have to-day the remains of structures that were built in the honour of gods whose very names are forgotten.

And to bury his gods is, after all, the only real apology that man can offer for having created them.

This outgrowing of religion is no new thing in human history. Thoughtful observers have always been struck by the mortality among the gods, although their demise has usually been chronicled in terms of exultation by rival worshippers. But here and there a keener observer has brought to bear on the matter a breadth of thought which robbed the phenomenon of its local character and gave it a universal application. Thus, in one of his wonderfully modern dialogues Lucian depicts the Olympian deities discussing, much in the spirit of a modern Church Congress, the prevalence of unbelief among men. The gods are disturbed at finding that men are reaching the stage of either not believing, or not troubling about them. There is a great deal of talk, and finally one of the minor deities treats them to a little plain truth—which appears to be as rare, and as unwelcome in heaven as on earth. He says—I quote from Froude's translation:—

> What other conclusion could they arrive at when they saw the confusion around them? Good men neglected, perishing in penury and slavery, and profligate wretches wealthy, honoured and powerful. Sacrilegious temple robbers undiscovered and unpunished; devotees and saints beaten and crucified. With such phenomena before them, of course men have doubted our existence.....We affect surprise that men who are not fools decline to put their faith in us. We ought rather to be pleased that there is a man left to say his prayers. We are among ourselves with no strangers present. Tell us, then, Zeus, have you ever really taken pains to distinguish between good men and bad? Theseus, not you, destroyed the robbers in Attica. As far as Providence was concerned, Sciron and Pity-O-Campus might have murdered and plundered to the end of time. If Eurystheus had not

> looked into matters, and sent Hercules upon his labours little would you have troubled yourself with the Hydras and Centaurs. Let us be candid. All that we have really cared for has been a steady altar service. Everything else has been left to chance. And now men are opening their eyes. They perceive that whether they pray or don't pray, go to church or don't go to church, makes no difference to them. And we are receiving our deserts.

The case could hardly be put more effectively. It is the appeal to experience with a vengeance, a form of argument of which religionists in general are very fond. Of course, the argument does not touch the question of the mere existence of a god, but it does set forth the revolt of awakened common sense against the worship of a "moral governor of the universe." We can say of our day, as Lucian said of his, that men are opening their eyes, and as a consequence the gods are receiving their deserts.

Generally speaking, it is not difficult to see the various steps by which man outgrew the conception of the government of the world by intelligent forces. From what we know of primitive thought we may say that at first the gods dominated all. From the fall of a rain-drop to the movement of a planet all was the work of gods. Merely to question their power was the wildest of errors and the gravest of crimes. Bit by bit this vast territory was reclaimed—a task at the side of which the conquest of the fever-stricken tropics or the frozen north is mere child's play. It is quite needless to enter into an elaborate speculation as to the exact steps by which this process of deanthropomorphization—to use a word of the late John Fiske's—was accomplished, but one can picture the main line by what we see taking place at later stages of development. And there is no exception to the rule that so

soon as any group of phenomena is brought within the conception of law the notion of deity in connection with those phenomena tends to die out. And the sum of the process is seen in the work of the great law givers of science, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Laplace, Lyell, Dalton, Darwin, etc., who between them have presented us with a universe in which the conception of deity simply has no place. Apologies apart, the idea of deity is foreign to the spirit and method of modern science.

In the region of the purely physical sciences this process may be regarded as complete. In morals and sociology, purely on account of the greater complexity of the subjects, mystical and semi-supernatural conceptions still linger, but it is only a question of time for these branches of knowledge to follow the same course as the physical sciences. In morals we are able to trace, more or less completely, the development of the moral sense from its first beginnings in the animal world to its highest developments in man. What is called the "mystery of morality" simply has no existence to anyone who is not a mystery-monger by profession or inclination. And here, too, the gods have been receiving their deserts. For it is now clear that instead of being a help to morals there has been no greater obstacle to a healthy morality than the play of religious ideas. In the name of God vices have been declared virtues and virtues branded as vices. Belief in God has been an unending source of moral perversion, and it lies upon the face of historical development that an intelligent morality, one that is capable of adapting itself to the changing circumstances of human nature, has only become possible with the breaking down of religious authority.

Exactly the same phenomenon faces us in connection with social life. We have to go back but a little way

in human history to come to a time when the existence of a State without a religion would have seemed to people impossible. Much as Christians have quarrelled about other things, they have been in agreement on this point. The historic fight between the established Church and the Nonconformists has never really been for the disestablishment of all religion, and the confining of the State to the discharge of purely secular functions, but mainly as to *which* religion the State shall uphold. To-day, the central issue is whether the State shall teach any religion, whether that does not lie right outside its legitimate functions. And this marks an enormous advance. It is a plain recognition of the truth that the gods have nothing to contribute of any value to the development of our social life. It marks the beginning of the end, and registers the truth that man must be his own saviour here as elsewhere. As in Lucian's day we are beginning to realize that whether we pray or don't pray, go to church or don't go to church, believe in the gods or don't believe in them, makes no real or substantial difference to natural happenings. Now as then we see good men punished and bad ones rewarded, and they who are not fools and have the courage to look facts in the face, decline to put their faith in a deity who is incapable of doing all things right or too careless to exert his power.

It is not that the fight is over, or that there is to-day little need to fight the forces of superstition. If that were so, there would be no need to write what is here written. Much as has been done, there is much yet to do. The revolt against specific beliefs only serves to illustrate a fight that is of much greater importance. For there is little real social gain if one merely exchanges one superstition for another. And, unfortunately, the gentleman who declared that he had

given up the errors of the Church of Rome in order to embrace those of the Church of England represents a fairly common type. It is the prevalence of a particular type of mind in society that constitutes a danger, and it is against this that our aim is ultimately directed. Great as is the amount of organized superstition that exists, the amount of unorganized superstition is still greater, and probably more dangerous. One of the revelations of the late war was the evidence it presented of the tremendous amount of raw credulity, of the low type of intelligence that was still current, and the small amount of critical ability the mass of people bring to bear upon life. The legends that gained currency—the army of Russians crossing England, the number of mutilated Belgian babies that were seen, the story of the Germans boiling down their dead to extract the fat, a story that for obscene stupidity beats everything else, the Mons' angels, the craze for mascots—all bore witness to the prevalence of a frame of mind that bodes ill for progress.

The truth is, as Sir James Frazer reminds us, that modern society is honeycombed with superstitions that are not in themselves a whit more intellectually respectable than those which dominate the minds of savages. "The smooth surface of cultured society is sapped and mined by superstition." Now and again these hidden mines explode noisily, but the superstition is always there, to be exploited by those who have the wit to use it. From this point of view Christianity is no more than a symptom of a source of great social weakness, a manifestation of a weakness that may find expression in strange and unexpected but always more or less dangerous ways. It is against the prevalence of this type of mind that the Freethinker is really fighting. Freethinkers realize—apparently they are the only ones that do realize—

that the creation of a better type of society is finally dependent upon the existence of a sanely educated intelligence, and that will never exist while there are large bodies of people who can persuade themselves that human welfare is in some way dependent upon, or furthered by, practices and beliefs that are not a bit more intellectually respectable than those of the cave men. If Christianity, as a mere system of beliefs, were destroyed, we should only have cleared the way for the final fight. Thousands of generations of superstitious beliefs and practices that have embodied themselves in our laws, our customs, our language, and our institutions, are not to be easily destroyed. It is comparatively simple to destroy a particular manifestation of this disastrous heritage, but the type of mind to which it has given birth is not so easily removed.

The fight is not over, but it is being fought from a new vantage ground, and with better weapons than have ever before been employed. History, anthropology, and psychology have combined to place in the hands of the modern Freethinker more deadly weapons than those of previous generations were able to employ. Before these weapons the defences of the faith crumble like wooden forts before modern artillery. It is no longer a question of debating whether religious beliefs are true. So long as we give a straightforward and honest meaning to those beliefs we know that they are not true. It is, to-day, mainly a question of making plain the nature of the forces which led men and women to regard them as being true. We know that the history of religion is the history of a delusion, and the task of the student is to recover those conditions which gave to this delusion an appearance of truth and reality. That is becoming more and more evident to all serious and informed students of the subject.

The challenge of Freethought to religion constitutes one of the oldest struggles in human history. It must have had its beginning in the first glimmer of doubt concerning a tribal deity which crossed the mind of some more than usually thoughtful savage. Under various forms and in many ways it has gone on ever since. It has had many variations of fortune, often apparently completely crushed, only to rise again stronger and more daring than ever. To-day, Freethought is the accepted mental attitude of a growing number of men and women whose intelligence admits of no question. It has taken a recognized place in the intellectual world, and its hold on the educated intelligence is rapidly increasing. It may well be that in one form or another the antagonism between critical Freethought and accepted teaching, whether secular or religious, will continue as one of the permanent aspects of social conflict. But so far as supernaturalism is concerned the final issue can be no longer in doubt. It is not by one voice or by one movement that supernaturalism is condemned. Its condemnation is written in the best forms of art, science and literature. And that is only another way of saying that it is condemned by life. Freethought holds the future in fee, and nothing but an entire reversal of the order of civilization can force it to forego its claims.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE AND MIND.

The outstanding feature of what may be called the natural history of associated life is the way in which biologic processes are gradually dominated by psychologic ones. Whatever be the nature of mind, a question that in no way concerns us here, there is no denying the importance of the phenomena that come within that category. To speak of the first beginnings of mind is, in this connection, idle language. In science there are no real beginnings. Things do not begin to be, they simply emerge, and their emergence is as imperceptible as the displacement of night by day, or the development of the chicken from the egg. But whatever the nature of the beginning of mind, its appearance in the evolutionary series marked an event of profound and revolutionary importance. Life received a new impetus, and the struggle for existence a new significance, the importance of which is not, even to-day, generally recognized. The old formulæ might still be used, but they had given to them a new significance. The race was still to the swift and the battle to the strong, but swiftness and strength were manifested in new ways and by new means. Cunning and intelligence began to do what was formerly done without their co-operation. A new force had appeared, arising out of the older forces as chemistry develops from physics and biology from both. And, as we should expect from analogy, we find the new force dominating the older ones, and even bending them to its needs.

Associated life meets us very early in the story of animal existence, and we may assume that it ranks as a genuine "survival quality." It enables some animals to survive the attacks of others that are individually stronger, and it may even be, as has been suggested, that associated life is the normal form, and that solitary animals represent a variation from the normal, or perhaps a case of degeneration. But one result of associated life is that it paves the way for the emergence of mind as an active force in social evolution. In his suggestive and important work on *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin has well shown how in the animal world the purely biologic form of the struggle for existence is checked and transformed by the factors of mutual aid, association and protection. His illustrations cover a very wide field; they include a great variety of animal forms, and he may fairly claim to have established the proposition that "an instinct has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution.....which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life."

But there is, on the whole, a very sharp limit set to the development of mind in the animal world. One cause of this is the absence of a true "social medium," to use the admirable phrase of that versatile thinker, George Henry Lewes. In the case of man, speech and writing enable him to give to his advances and discoveries a cumulative force such as can never exist in their absence. On that subject more will be said later. At present we may note another very important consequence of the development of mind in evolution. In pre-human, or sub-human society, perfection in the struggle for existence takes the form of the creation or the perfecting of an organic tool. Teeth or claws be-

come stronger or larger, a limb is modified, sight becomes keener, or there is a new effect in coloration. The changes here, it will be observed, are all of an organic kind, they are a part of the animal and are inseparable from it, and they are only transmissible by biologic heredity. And the rate of development is, of necessity, slow.

When we turn to man and note the way in which he overcomes the difficulties of his environment, we find them to be mainly of a different order. His instruments are not personal, in the sense of being a part of his organic structure. We may say they do not belong to him so much as they do to the race; while they are certainly transmitted from generation to generation irrespective of individuals. Instead of achieving conquest of his environment by developing an organic structure, man creates an inorganic tool. In a sense he subdues and moulds the environment to his needs, rather than modifies his structure in order to cope with the environment. Against extremes of temperature he fashions clothing and builds habitations. He discovers fire, probably the most important discovery ever made by mankind. He adds to his strength in defence and attack by inventing weapons. He guards himself from starvation by planting seeds, and so harnesses the productive forces of nature to his needs. He tames animals and so secures living engines of labour. Later, he compensates for his bodily weaknesses by inventing instruments which aid sight, hearing, etc. Inventions are multiplied, methods of locomotion and transportation are discovered, and the difficulties of space and time are steadily minimized. The net result of all this is that as a mere biologic phenomenon man's evolution is checked. The biologic modifications that still go on are of comparatively small importance, except, probably, in the case of

evolution against disease. The developments that take place are mainly mental in form and are social in their incidence.

Now if the substantial truth of what has been said be admitted, and I do not see how it can be successfully challenged, there arise one or two considerations of supreme importance. The first of these is that social history becomes more and more a history of social psychology. In social life we are watching the play of social mind expressed through the medium of the individual. The story of civilization is the record of the piling of idea on idea, and the transforming power of the whole on the environment. For tools, from the flint chip of primitive man, down to the finished instrument of the modern mechanic, are all so many products of human mentality. From the primitive dug-out to the Atlantic liner, from the stone spear-head to the modern rifle, in all the inventions of civilized life we are observing the application of mind to the conquest of time, space, and material conditions. Our art, our inventions, our institutions, are all so many illustrations of the power of mind in transforming the environment. A history of civilization, as distinguished from a mere record of biologic growth, is necessarily a history of the growing power of mind. It is the cumulative ideas of the past expressed in inventions and institutions that form the driving power behind the man of to-day. These ideas form the most valuable part of man's heritage, make him what he is, and contain the promise of all that he may become.

So long as we confine ourselves to biologic evolution, the way in which qualities are transmitted is plain. There is no need to go beyond the organism itself. But this heritage of ideas, peculiarly human as it is, requires a " carrier " of an equally unique kind. It is at this point that the significance of what we have

called the "social medium" emerges. The full significance of this was first seen by G. H. Lewes.[1] Writing so far back as 1879 he said:—

> The distinguishing character of human psychology is that to the three great factors, organism, external medium, and heredity; it adds a fourth, namely, the relation to a social medium, with its product, the general mind.....While the mental functions are products of the individual organism, the product, mind, is more than an individual product. Like its great instrument language, it is at once individual and social. Each man speaks in virtue of the functions of vocal expression, but also in virtue of the social need of communication. The words spoken are not his creation, yet he, too, must appropriate them by what may be called a creative process before he can understand them. What his tribe speaks he repeats; but he does not simply echo their words, he rethinks them. In the same way he adopts their experiences when he assimilates them to his own.....Further, the experiences come and go; they correct, enlarge, and destroy one another, leaving behind them a certain residual store, which condensed in intuitions and formulated in principles, direct and modify all future experiences.....Men living in groups co-operate like the organs in an organism. Their actions have a common impulse to a common end. Their desires and opinions bear the common stamp of an impersonal direction. Much of their life is common to all. The roads, market-places and temples are for each and all.

[1] It will ease my feelings if I am permitted to here make a protest against the shameless way in which this suggestive writer has been pillaged by others without the slightest acknowledgement. They have found him, as Lamb said of some other writers, "damned good to steal from." His series of volumes, *Problems of Life and Mind*, have been borrowed from wholesale without the slightest thanks or recognition.

> Customs arise and are formulated in laws, the restraint of all.....Each generation is born in this social medium, and has to adapt itself to the established forms.....A nation, a tribe, a sect is the medium of the individual mind, as a sea, a river, or a pond, is the medium of a fish.[2]

Biologically, what man inherits is capacity for acquisition. But what he shall acquire, the direction in which his native capacity shall express itself, is a matter over which biologic forces have no control. This is determined by society and social life. Given quite equal capacity in two individuals, the output will be very different if one is brought up in a remote Spanish village and the other in Paris or London. Whether a man shouts long live King George or long live the Kaiser is mainly a question of social surroundings, and but very little one of difference in native capacity. The child of parents living in the highest civilized society, if taken away while very young and brought up amid a people in a very primitive state of culture, would, on reaching maturity, differ but little from the people

[2] *Study of Psychology*, pp. 139, 161-5. So again, a more recent writer says: "It is not man himself who thinks but his social community; the source of his thoughts is in the social medium in which he lives, the social atmosphere which he breathes.....The influence of environment upon the human mind has always been recognized by psychologists and philosophers, but it has been considered a secondary factor. On the contrary, the social medium which the child enters at birth, in which he lives, moves and has his being, is fundamental. Toward this environment the individual from childhood to ripest old age is more or less receptive; rarely can the maturest minds so far succeed in emancipating themselves from this medium so far as to undertake independent reflection, while complete emancipation is impossible, for all the organs and modes of thought, all the organs for constructing thoughts have been moulded or at least thoroughly imbued by it" (L. Gumplowicz, *Outlines of Sociology*, p. 157).

around him. He would think the thoughts that were common to the society in which he was living as he would speak their language and wear their dress. Had Shakespeare been born among savages he could never have written *Hamlet*. For the work of the genius, as for that of the average man, society must provide the materials in the shape of language, ideas, institutions, and the thousand and one other things that go to make up the life of a group, and which may be seen reflected in the life of the individual. Suppose, says Dr. McDougall:—

> that throughout the period of half a century every child born to English parents was at once exchanged (by the power of a magician's wand) for an infant of the French, or other, European nation. Soon after the close of this period the English nation would be composed of individuals of French extraction, and the French of individuals of English extraction. It is, I think, clear that, in spite of this complete exchange of innate characters between the two nations, there would be but little immediate change of national characteristics. The French people would still speak French, and the English would speak English, with all the local diversities to which we are accustomed and without perceptible change of pronunciation. The religion of the French would still be predominantly Roman Catholic, and the English people would still present the same diversity of Protestant creeds. The course of political institutions would have suffered no profound change, the customs and habits of the two peoples would exhibit only such changes as might be attributed to the lapse of time, though an acute observer might notice an appreciable approximation of the two peoples towards one another in all these respects. The inhabitant of France would still be a Frenchman and the inhabitant of England an Englishman to all outward seeming, save that the physical appearance of the two peoples would be transposed.

> And we may go even further and assert that the same would hold good if a similar exchange of infants were effected between the English and any other less closely allied nation, say the Turks or the Japanese.[3]

The products of human capacity are the material of which civilization is built; these products constitute the inheritance which one generation receives from another. Whether this inheritance be large or small simple or complex, it is the chief determinant which shapes the personality of each individual. What each has by biological heredity is a given structure, that is, capacity. But the direction of that capacity, the command it enables one to acquire over his environment, is in turn determined by the society into which he happens to be born.

It has already been said that the materials of civilization, whether they be tools, or institutions, or inventions, or discoveries, or religious or ethical teachings, are facts that can be directly described as psychological. An institution—the Church, the Crown, the Magistracy—is not transmitted as a building or as so many sheets of paper, but as an idea or as a set of ideas. A piece of machinery is, in the same way, a mental fact, and is a physical one in only a subordinate sense. And if this be admitted, we reach the further truth that the environment to which man has to adapt himself is essentially, so far as it is a social environment, psychological. Not alone are the outward marks of social life—the houses in which man lives, the machines he uses to do his bidding—products of his mental activity, but the more important features of his environment, to which he must adapt himself, and which so largely shape his character and determine his conduct, are of a wholly psychological character.

[3] *Social Psychology*, pp. 330-1.

In any society that is at all distinct from the animal, there exist a number of beliefs, ideas and institutions, traditions, and, in a later stage, a literature which play a very important part in determining the direction of man's mind. With increasing civilization, and the development of better means of intercourse, any single society finds itself brought into touch and under the influence of other social groups. The whole of these influences constitute a force which, surrounding an individual at birth, inevitably shapes character in this or that direction. They dominate the physical aspect of life, and represent the determining forces of social growth. Eliminate the psychological forces of life and you eliminate all that can be properly called civilization. It is wholly the transforming power of mind on the environment that creates civilization, and it is only by a steady grasp of this fact that civilization can be properly understood.

I have pointed out a distinction between biological and social, or psychological, heredity. But there is one instance in which the two agree. This is that we can only understand a thing by its history. We may catalogue the existing peculiarities of an animal form with no other material than that of the organism before us, but thoroughly to understand it we must know its history. Similarly, existing institutions may have their justification in the present, but the causes of their existence lie buried in the past. A king may to-day be honoured on account of his personal worth, but the reason why there is a king to be honoured carries us back to that state of culture in which the primitive priest and magic worker inspires fear and awe. When we ring bells to call people to church we perpetuate the fact that our ancestors rang them to drive away evil spirits. We wear black at a funeral because our primitive ancestors wished to hide them-

selves from the dead man's ghost. We strew flowers on a grave because food and other things were once buried with the dead so that their spirits might accompany the dead to the next world. In short, with all human customs we are forced, if we wish to know the reason for their present existence, to seek it in the ideas that have dominated the minds of previous generations.[4]

No one who has studied, in even a cursory manner, the development of our social institutions can avoid recognition of the profound influence exerted by the primitive conceptions of life, death, and of the character of natural forces. Every one of our social institutions was born in the shadow of superstition, and superstition acts as a powerful force in determining the form they assume. Sir Henry Maine has shown to what a large extent the laws of inheritance are bound up with ancestor worship.[5] Spencer has done the same service for nearly all our institutions,[6] and Mr. Elton says that "the oldest customs of inheritance in England and Germany were, in their beginnings, con-

[4] "The tyranny exercised unconsciously on men's minds is the only real tyranny, because it cannot be fought against. Tiberius, Ghengis Khan, and Napoleon were assuredly redoubtable tyrants, but from the depths of their graves Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Mahomet exerted on the human soul a far profounder tyranny. A conspiracy may overthrow a tyrant, but what can it avail against a firmly established belief? In its violent struggle with Roman Catholicism it is the French Revolution that has been vanquished, and this in spite of the fact that the sympathy of the crowd was apparently on its side, and in spite of recourse to destructive measures as pitiless as those of the Inquisition. The only real tyrants that humanity has known have always been the memories of its dead, or the illusions it has forged for itself" (Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 153).

[5] See *Early History of Institutions*, and *Early Law and Custom*.

[6] *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I.

nected with a domestic religion, and based upon a worship of ancestral spirits of which the hearthplace was essentially the altar." [7] The same truth meets us in the study of almost any institution. In fact, it is not long before one who *thinks* evolution, instead of merely knowing its formulæ, begins to realize the truth of the saying by a German sociologist that in dealing with social institutions we are concerned with the "mental creations of aggregates." They are dependent upon the persistence of a set of ideas, and so long as these ideas are unshaken they are substantially indestructible. To remove them the ideas upon which they rest must be shaken and robbed of their authority. That is the reason why at all times the fight for reform so largely resolves itself into a contest of ideas. Motives of self-interest may enter into the defence of an institution, and in some case may be responsible for the attempt to plant an institution where it does not already exist, but in the main institutions persist because of their harmony with a frame of mind that is favourable to their being.

A great deal of criticism has been directed against the conclusion of Buckle that improvement in the state of mankind has chiefly resulted from an improvement in the intellectual outlook. And yet when stated with the necessary qualifications the generalization is as sound as it can well be. Certainly, the belief held in some quarters, and stated with an air of scientific precision, that the material environment is the active force which is ever urging to new mental development will not fit the facts; for, as we have seen, the environment to which human nature must adapt itself is mainly mental in character, that is, it is made up in an increasing measure of the products of man's own mental

[7] *Origins of English History*, p. 261.

activity. The theory of the sentimental religionist that the evil in the world results from the wickedness of man, or, as he is fond of putting it, from the hardness of man's heart, is grotesque in its ineffectiveness. Soft heads have far more to do with the evil in the world than have hard hearts. Indeed, one of the standing difficulties of the orthodox moralist is, not to explain the deeds of evil men, which explain themselves, but to account for the harm done by "good" men, and often as a consequence of their goodness. The moral monster is a rarity, and evil is rarely the outcome of a clear perception of its nature and a deliberate resolve to pursue it. Paradoxical as it may sound, it demands a measure of moral strength to do wrong, consciously and deliberately, which the average man or woman does not possess. And the world has never found it a matter of great difficulty to deal with its "bad" characters; it is the "good" ones that present it with a constant problem.

The point is worth stressing, and we may do it from more than one point of view. We may take, first of all, the familiar illustration of religious persecution, as exemplified in the quarrels of Catholics and Protestants. On the ground of moral distinction no line could be drawn between the two parties. Each shuddered at the persecution inflicted by the other, and each regarded the teachings of the other with the same degree of moral aversion. And it has often been noted that the men who administered so infamous an institution as the Inquisition were not, in even the majority of cases, bad men.[8] A few may have had interested

[8] Speaking of the Inquisition, Mr. H. C. Lea, in his classic *History of the Inquisition*, says, "There is no doubt that the people were as eager as their pastors to send the heretic to the stake. There is no doubt that men of the kindliest tempers, the profoundest aspirations, the purest zeal for

motives, but it would have been impossible to have maintained so brutal an institution in the absence of a general conviction of its rightness. In private life those who could deliver men, women, and even children over to torture were not worse husbands or parents than others. Such differences as existed cannot be attributed to a lack of moral endeavour, or to a difference of "moral temperament." It was a difference of intellectual outlook, and given certain religious convictions persecution became a religious necessity. The moral output was poor because the intellectual standpoint was a wrong one.

If we could once get over the delusion of thinking of human nature as being fundamentally different five hundred years ago from what it is to-day, we should escape a great many fallacies that are prevalent. The changes that have taken place in human nature during the historic period are so slight as to be practically negligible. The motives that animate men and women to-day are the motives that animated men and women a thousand or two thousand years ago. The change is in the direction and form of their manifestation only, and it is in the light of the human nature around us that we must study and interpret the human nature that has gone before us. From that point of view we may safely conclude that bad institutions were kept

righteousness, professing a religion founded on love and charity, were ruthless where heresy was concerned, and were ready to trample it out at any cost. Dominic and Francis, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, Innocent III. and St. Louis, were types, in their several ways, of which humanity, in any age, might feel proud, and yet they were as unsparing of the heretic as Ezzelin di Romano was of his enemies. With such men it was not hope of gain or lust of blood or pride of opinion or wanton exercise of power, but sense of duty, and they but represented what was universal public opinion from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century." Vol. I., p. 234.

in being in the past for the same reason that they are kept alive to-day. The majority must be blind to their badness; and in any case it is a general perception of their badness which leads to their destruction.

The subject of crime illustrates the same point. Against crime as such, society is as set as ever. But our attitude toward the causation and cure of crime, and, above all, to the treatment of the criminal, has undergone a profound alteration. And the change that has taken place here has been away from the Christian conception which brutalized the world for so long, towards the point of view taken up by the ancient Greeks, that wrong doing is the outcome of ignorance. Expressed in the modern manner we should say that crime is the result of an undeveloped nature, or of a pathological one, or of a reversion to an earlier predatory type, or the result of any or all of these factors in combination with defective social conditions. But this is only another way of saying that we have exchanged the old, brutal, and ineffective methods for more humane and effective ones because we look at the problem of crime from a different intellectual angle. A more exact knowledge of the causation of crime has led us to a more sensible and a more humane treatment of the criminal. And this, not alone in his own behalf, but in the interests of the society in which he lives. We may put it broadly that improvement comes from an enlightened way of looking at things. Common observation shows that people will go on tolerating forms of brutality, year after year, without the least sense of their wrongness. Familiarity, and the absence of any impetus to examine current practice from a new point of view seem to account for this. In the seventeenth century the same people who could watch, without any apparent hostility, the torture of an old woman on the fantastic charge of intercourse with

Satan, had their feelings outraged by hearing a secular song on Sunday. Imprisonment for "blasphemy," once regarded as a duty, has now become ridiculous to all reasonable people. At one and the same time, a little more than a hundred years ago in this country, the same people who could denounce cock-fighting on account of its brutality, could watch unmoved the murdering of little children in the factories of Lancashire. Not so long ago men in this country fought duels under a sense of moral compulsion, and the practice was only abandoned when a changed point of view made people realize the absurdity of trying to settle the justice of a cause by determining which of two people were the most proficient with sword or pistol. We have a continuation of the same absurdity in those larger duels fought by nations where the old verbal absurdities still retain their full force, and where we actually add another absurdity by retaining a number of professional duellists who must be ready to embark on a duel whether they have any personal feeling in the matter or not. And it seems fairly safe to say that when it is realized that the duel between nations as a means of settling differences is not a bit more intellectually respectable than was the ancient duello we shall not be far removed from seeing the end of one of the greatest dangers to which modern society is exposed.

Examples might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough has been said to show what small reason there is for assuming that changes in institutions are brought about by the operation of some occult moral sense. It is the enlightenment of the moral sense by the growth of new ideas, by the impact of new knowledge leading to a revaluation of things that is mainly responsible for the change. The question of whether a man should or should not be burned for a difference in religious belief

was never one that could be settled by weighing up the moral qualities of the two parties in the dispute. All the moral judgment that has ever existed, even if combined in the person of a single individual could never decide that issue. It was entirely a question of acquiring a new point of view from which to examine the subject. Until that was done the whole force of the moral sense was on the side of the persecutor. To put the matter paradoxically, the better the man the worse persecutor he became. It was mental enlightenment that was needed, not moral enthusiasm.

The question of progress thus becomes, in all directions, one of the impact of new ideas, in an environment suitable to their reception and growth. A society shut in on itself is always comparatively unprogressive, and but for the movement of classes within it would be completely so. The more closely the history of civilization is studied the more clearly does that fact emerge. Civilization is a synthetic movement, and there can be no synthesis in the absence of dissolution and resolution.

A fight of old ideas against new ones, a contest of clashing culture levels, a struggle to get old things looked at from a new point of view, these are the features that characterize all efforts after reform. It was said by some of the eighteenth century philosophers that society was held together by agreement in a bond. That is not quite correct. The truth is that society is held together, as is any phase of social life, by a bond of agreement. The agreement is not of the conscious, documentary order, but it is there, and it consists in sharing a common life created and maintained by having a common tradition, and a common stock of ideas and ideals. It is this that makes a man a member of one social group rather than of another—Chinese, American, French, German, or Choctaw. There is no

discriminating feature in what is called the economic needs of people. The economic needs of human beings —food, clothing, and shelter, are of the same order the world over. And certainly the fact of a Chinaman sharing in the economic life of Britain, or an Englishman sharing in the economic life of China, would not entitle either to be called genuine members of the group in which he happened to be living. Membership only begins to be when those belonging to a group share in a common mental outfit. Even within a society, and in relation to certain social groups, one can see illustrations of the same principle. A man is not really a member of a society of artists, lawyers, or doctors merely by payment of an annual subscription. He is that only when he becomes a participant in the mental life of the group.[9] It is this common stock of

[9] This seems to me to give the real significance of Nationality. It has been argued by some that nationality is a pure myth, as unreal as the divinity of a king. The principal ground for this denial of nationality appears to be that so-called national characteristics are seen to undergo drastic transformation when their possessors are subject to a new set of influences. This may be quite true, but if nationality, in the sense of being a product of biological heredity, is ruled out, it does not follow that nationality is thereby destroyed. The fact may remain but it demands a different interpretation. And if what has been said above be true, it follows that nationality is not a personal fact, but an extra or super-personal one. It belongs to the group rather than to the individual, and is created by the possession of a common speech, a common literature, and a common group life. And quite naturally, when the individual is lifted out of this special social influence its power may well be weakened, and in the case of his children may be non-existent, or replaced by the special characteristics of the new group into which he is born. The discussion of nationality ought not, therefore, to move along the lines of acceptance or rejection of the conception of nationality, but of how far specific national characteristics admit of modification under the pressure of new conditions.

mental facts which lies at the root of all collective ideas—an army, a Church, or a nation. And ever the fight is by way of attack and defence of the psychologic fact.[10]

To do the Churches and other vested interests justice, they have never lost sight of this truth, and it would

[10] It would take too long to elaborate, but it may be here noted that in the human group the impelling force is not so much needs as desires, and that fact raises the whole issue from the level of biology to that of psychology. So long as life is at a certain level man shares with the animal the mere need for food. But at another level there arises not merely the need for food, but a desire for certain kind of food, cooked in a particular manner, and served in a special style. And provided that we do not by hunger reduce man to the level of the beast again, the desire will be paramount and will determine whether food shall be eaten or not. So, again, with the fact of sex and marriage. At the animal level we have the crude fact of sex, and this is, indeed, inescapable at any stage. But the growth of civilization brings about the fact that the need for the gratification of the sexual appetite is regulated by the secondary qualities of grace of form, or of disposition, which are the immediate determinants of whether a particular man shall marry a particular woman or not. Again, it is the *desire* for power and distinction, not the *need* for money that impels men to spend their lives in building up huge fortunes. And, finally, we have the fact that a great many of our present needs are transformed desires. The working man of to-day counts as needs, as do we all more or less, a number of things that began as pure desires. We say we need books, pictures, music, etc. But none of these things can be really brought under the category of things necessary to life. They are the creation of man's mental cravings. Without them we say life would not be worth living, and it is well that we should all feel so. Professor Marshall rightly dwells upon this point by saying: "Although it is man's wants in the early stages of development that give rise to his activities, yet afterwards each new step is to be regarded as the development of new activities giving rise to new wants, rather than of new wants giving rise to new activities."—(*Principles of Economics*, Vol. I., p. 164.)

have been better for the race had others been equally alive to its importance. The Churches have never ceased to fight for the control of those public organs that make for the formation of opinion. Their struggle to control the press, the platform, and the school means just this. Whatever they may have taught, self-interest forced upon them recognition of the truth that it was what men thought about things that mattered. They have always opposed the introduction of new ideas, and have fought for the retention of old ones. It was a necessity of their existence. It was also an admission of the truth that in order for reform to become a fact the power of traditional ideas must be broken. Man is what he thinks, is far nearer the truth than the once famous saying, "Man is what he eats." As a member of a social group man is dominated by his ideas of things, and any movement of reform must take cognisance of that fact if it is to cherish reasonable hopes of success.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT IS FREETHOUGHT?

FREEDOM of thought and freedom of speech stand to each other as the two halves of a pair of scissors. Without freedom of speech freedom of thought is robbed of the better part of its utility, even if its existence is not threatened. The one reacts on the other. As thought provides the material for speech, so, in turn, it deteriorates when it is denied expression. Speech is, in fact, one of the great factors in human progress. It is that which enables one generation to hand on to another the discoveries made, the inventions produced, the thoughts achieved, and so gives a degree of fixity to the progress attained. For progress, while expressed through the individual, is achieved by the race. Individually, the man of to-day is not strikingly superior in form or capacity to the man of five or ten thousand years ago. But he knows more, can achieve more, and is in that sense stronger than was his ancestors. He is the heir of the ages, not as a figure of speech, but as the most sober of facts. He inherits what previous generations have acquired; the schoolboy of to-day starts with a capital of inherited knowledge that would have been an outfit for a philosopher a few thousand years ago.

It is this that makes speech of so great importance to the fact of progress. Without speech, written or verbal, it would be impossible to conserve the products of human achievement. Each generation would have

to start where its predecessor commenced, and it would finish at about the same point. It would be the fable of Sisyphus illustrated in the passing of each generation of human beings.

But speech implies communication. There is not very much pleasure in speaking to oneself. Even the man who apologised for the practice on the ground that he liked to address a sensible assembly would soon grow tired of so restricted an audience. The function of speech is to transmit ideas, and it follows, therefore, that every embargo on the free exchange of ideas, every obstacle to complete freedom of speech, is a direct threat to the well-being of civilisation. As Milton could say that a good book "is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up to a life beyond life," and that "he who destroys a good book kills reason itself," so we may say that he who strikes at freedom of thought and speech is aiming a blow at the very heart of human betterment.

In theory, the truth of what has been said would be readily admitted, but in practice it has met, and still meets, with a vigorous opposition. Governments have exhausted their powers to prevent freedom of intercourse between peoples, and every Church and chapel has used its best endeavours to the same end. Even to-day, when all are ready to pay lip-homage to freedom of thought, the obstacles in the way of a genuine freedom are still very great. Under the best possible conditions there will probably always be some coercion of opinion, if only of that unconscious kind which society as a whole exerts upon its individual members. But to this we have to add the coercion that is consciously exerted to secure the formation of particular opinions, and which has the dual effect of inducing dissimulation in some and impotency in others. Quite ignorantly parents commence the work when

they force upon children their own views of religion and inculcate an exaggerated respect for authority. They create an initial bias that is in only too many cases fatal to real independence of thought. Social pressure continues what a mistaken early training has commenced. When opinions are made the test of "good form," and one's social standing partly determined by the kind of opinions that one holds, there is developed on the one side hypocrisy, and on the other, because certain opinions are banned, thought in general is unhealthily freed from the sobering influence of enlightened criticism.[1]

To-day the legal prohibition of religious dissent is practically ineffective, and is certainly far less demoralizing than the pressure that is exerted socially and unofficially. In all probability this has always been the case. For legal persecution must be open. Part of its purpose is publicity, and that in itself is apt to rouse hostility. Against open, legal persecution a man will make a stand, or if he gives way to the force arrayed against him may do so with no feeling of personal degradation. But the conformity that is secured by a threat of social boycott, the freedom of

[1] It is a curious thing, as Philip Gilbert Hamerton points out in one of his essays, that in England religious freedom appears to exist in inverse proportion to rank. The king has no freedom whatever in a choice of religion. His religion is part of the position. An English nobleman, speaking generally, has two religions from which to choose. He may be either a member of the established Church or of the Roman Catholic. In the middle classes there is the choice of all sorts of religious sects, so long as they are Christian. Religious dissent is permitted so long as it does not travel beyond the limits of the chapel. And when we come to the better class working man, he has the greatest freedom of all. His social position does not depend upon his belonging to this or that Church, and he may, to borrow a phrase from Heine, go to hell in his own fashion.

speech that is prevented by choking the avenues of intellectual intercourse, is far more deadly in its consequences, and far more demoralizing in its influence on character. To give way, as thousands do, not to the open application of force, which carries no greater personal reflection than does the soldier's surrender to superior numbers, but to the dread of financial loss, to the fear of losing a social status, that one may inwardly despise even while in the act of securing it, or from fear of offending those whom we may feel are not worthy of our respect, these are the things that cannot be done without eating into one's sense of self-respect, and inflicting upon one's character an irreparable injury.

On this matter more will be said later. For the present I am concerned with the sense in which we are using the word "Freethought." Fortunately, little time need be wasted in discussing the once popular retort to the Freethinker that if the principle of determinism be accepted "free" thought is impossible. It is surprising that such an argument should ever have secured a vogue, and is only now interesting as an indication of the mentality of the defender of orthodox religion. Certainly no one who properly understands the meaning of the word would use such an argument. At best it is taking a word from sociology, a sphere in which the meaning is quite clear and intelligible, and applying it in the region of physical science where it has not, and is not intended to have, any meaning at all. In physical science a thing is what it does, and the business of science is to note the doings of forces and masses, their actions and reactions, and express them in terms of natural "law." From the point of view of physical science a thing is neither free nor unfree, and to discuss natural happenings in terms of freedom or bondage is equal to discussing

smell in terms of sight or colour in terms of smell. But applied in a legitimate way the word " free " is not only justifiable, it is indispensible. The confusion arises when we take a word from a department in which its meaning is quite clear and apply it in a region where it has no application whatever.

Applied to opinion " Free " has the same origin and the same application as the expressions " a free man," or a " free State," or " a free people." Taking either of these expressions it is plain that they could have originated only in a state of affairs where some people are " free," and some are living in a state of bondage or restraint. There is no need to trace the history of this since so much is implied in the word itself. A free State is one in which those belonging to it determine their own laws without being coerced by an outside power. A free man is one who is permitted to act as his own nature prompts. The word " free " implies nothing as to the nature of moral or mental causation, that is a question of a wholly different order. The free man exists over against the one who is not free, the free State over against one that is held in some degree of subjection to another State. There is no other meaning to the word, and that meaning is quite clear and definite.

Now Freethought has a precisely similar significance. It says nothing as to the nature of thought, the origin of thought, or the laws of thought. With none of these questions is it vitally concerned. It simply asserts that there are conditions under which thought is not " free," that is, where it is coerced to a foregone conclusion, and that these conditions are fatal to thought in its higher and more valuable aspects. Freethought is that form of thinking that proceeds along lines of its own determining, rather than along lines that are laid down by authority. In

actual practice it is immediately concerned with the expression of opinion rather than with its formation, since no authority can prevent the formation of opinion in any mind that is at all independent in its movements and forms opinions on the basis of observed facts and adequate reasoning. But its chief and primary significance lies in its repudiation of the right of authority to say what form the expression of opinion shall take. And it is also clear that such a term as "Freethought" could only have come into general use and prominence in a society in which the free circulation of opinion was more or less impeded.

It thus becomes specially significant that, merely as a matter of history, the first active manifestation of Freethought should have occurred in connection with a revolt against religious teaching and authority. This was no accident, but was rather a case of necessity. For, in the first place, there is no other subject in which pure authority plays so large a part as it does in religion. All churches and all priesthoods, ancient and modern, fall back upon the principle of pure authority as a final method of enforcing their hold upon the people. That, it may be noted in passing, is one of the chief reasons why in all ages governments have found religion one of the most serviceable agencies in maintaining their sway. Secondly, there seems to have been from the very earliest times a radically different frame of mind in the approach to secular and religious matters. So far as one can see there appears to be, even in primitive societies, no very strong opposition to the free discussion of matters that are of a purely secular nature. Questions of ways and means concerning these are freely debated among savage tribes, and in all discussion differences of opinion must be taken for granted. It is when we approach religious subjects that a difference is seen.

Here the main concern is to determine the will of the gods, and all reasoning is thus out of place, if not a positive danger. The only thing is to discover " God's will," and when we have his, or his will given in " sacred " books the embargo on free thinking is complete. This feature continues to the end. We do not even to-day discuss religious matters in the same open spirit in which secular matters are debated. There is a bated breath, a timidity of criticism in discussing religious subjects that does not appear when we are discussing secular topics. With the thoroughly religious man it is solely a question of what God wishes him to do. In religion this affords the only latitude for discussion, and even that disappears largely when the will of God is placed before the people in the shape of " revealed " writings. Fortunately for the world " inspired " writings have never been so clearly penned as to leave no room for doubt as to what they actually meant. Clarity of meaning has never been one of the qualities of divine authorship.

In this connection it is significant that the first form of democratic government of which we have any clear record should have been in freethinking, sceptical Greece. Equally notable is it that in both Rome and Greece the measure of mental toleration was greater than it has ever been in other countries before or since. In Rome to the very end of the Pagan domination there existed no legislation against opinions, as such. The holders of certain opinions might find themselves in uncomfortable positions now and then, but action against them had to rest on some ground other than that which was afterwards known as heresy. There existed no law in the Roman Empire against freedom of opinion, and those who are familiar with Mr. H. C. Lea's classic, *History of the Inquisition,* will recall his account of the various tactics adopted by the Chris-

tian Church to introduce measures that would accustom the public mind to legislation which should establish the principle of persecution for opinion.[2] In

[2] See specially Vol. I., chapters 6, 7, and 8. One is sorely tempted to engage in what would be a rather lengthy aside on the mental freedom enjoyed by the people of ancient Greece, but considerations of cogency advise a shorter comment in this form. In the first place we have to note that neither the Greeks nor the Romans possessed anything in the shape of "sacred" books. That, as the history of Mohammedanism and Christianity shows, is one of the most disastrous things that can happen to any people. But apart from this there were several circumstances connected with the development of the Greek peoples that made for freedom of opinion. There was no uniform theology to commence with, and the configuration of the country, while enough to maintain local independence, was not enough to prevent a certain amount of intercourse. And it would certainly seem that no people were ever so devoid of intolerance as were the ancient Greeks. It is true that the history of Greece was not without its examples of intolerance, but these were comparatively few, and, as Professor Bury says, persecution was never organized. The gods were criticized in both speeches and plays. Theories of Materialism and Atheism were openly taught and were made the topic of public discussion. There was, indeed, a passion for the discussion of all sorts of subjects, and to discussion nothing is sacred. The best thought of Rome owed its impetus to Greece, and at a later date it was the recovered thought of Greece which gave the impetus to Mohammedan Spain in its cultivation of science and philosophy, and so led to the partial recovery of Europe from the disastrous control of the Christian Church. Nor need it be assumed that the work of Greece was due to the possession of a superior brain power. Of that there is not the slightest vestige of proof. It is simply that the ancient Greek lived in a freer mental atmosphere. The mind had less to hamper it in its operations; it had no organized and powerful Church that from the cradle to the grave pursued its work of preventing free criticism and the play of enlightened opinion. For several centuries the world has been seeking to recover some of its lost liberties with only a very moderate success. But if one thinks of what the Greeks were, and if one adds

the end the Church succeeded in effecting this, and its success was registered in the almost unbelievable degradation of the human intellect which was exhibited in the Christian world for centuries. So complete was this demoralization that more than a thousand years later we find men announcing as a most daring principle a demand for freedom of discussion which in old Greece and Rome was never officially questioned. Christianity not merely killed freedom wherever it established itself, but it came very near killing even the memory of it.

It was, therefore, inevitable that in the western world Freethought should come into prominence in relation to the Christian religion and its claims. In the Christian Church there existed an organization which not alone worked with the avowed intention of determining what men should think, but finally proceeded to what was, perhaps, the logical conclusion, to say what they should not think. No greater tyranny than the Christian Church has ever existed. And this applies, not to the Roman Church alone, but to every Church within the limit of its opportunities. In the name and in the interests of religion the Christian Church took some of the worst passions of men and consecrated them. The killing of heretics became one of the most solemn duties and it was urged upon secular rulers as such. The greatest instrument of oppression ever formed, the Inquisition, was fashioned for no other purpose than to root out opinions that were obnoxious to the Church. It would have been bad enough had the attempts of the Church to control opinion been limited to religion. But that was not the case. It aimed at taking under its control all

to what they had achieved a possible two thousand years of development, he will then have some notion of what the triumph of the Christian Church meant to the world.

sorts of teaching on all sorts of subjects. Nothing would have surprised an inhabitant of ancient Rome more, could he have revisited the earth some dozen centuries after the establishment of Christianity, than to have found men being punished for criticising doctrines that were in his day openly laughed at. And nothing could have given an ancient Athenian greater cause for wonder than to have found men being imprisoned and burned for teaching cosmical theories that were being debated in the schools of Athens two thousand years before. Well might they have wondered what had happened to the world, and well might they have come to the conclusion that it had been overtaken by an attack of universal insanity. And the explanation would not have been so very wide of the truth.

In this matter of suppression of freedom of thinking there was little to choose between the Churches. Each aimed at controlling the thought of mankind, each was equally intolerant of any variation from the set line, and each employed the same weapon of coercion so far as circumstances permitted. At most the Protestant Churches substituted a dead book for a living Church, and in the end it may be questioned, when all allowance is made for the changed circumstances in which Protestantism operated, whether the rule of the new Church was not more disastrous than the older one. It had certainly less excuse for its intolerance. The Roman Catholic Church might urge that it never claimed to stand for freedom of opinion, and whatever its sins it was so far free from the offence of hypocrisy. But the Protestant Churches could set up no such plea; they professed to stand on freedom of conscience. And they thus added the quality of inconsistency and hypocrisy to an offence that was already grave enough in itself.

But whatever opinion one may have on that point, it is certain that in practice the Protestant leaders were as opposed to freedom of thought as were the Roman Catholics. And Protestant bigotry left a mark on European history that deserves special recognition. For the first time it made the profession of Christianity a definite part of the law of the secular State.[3] Hitherto there had been no law in any of the European States which made a profession of Christianity necessary. There had been plenty of persecutions of non-Christians, and the consequences of a rejection of Christianity, if one lived in a Christian State, were serious enough. But when the secular State punished the heretic it was a manifestation of good will towards the Church and not the expression of a legal enactment. It was the direct influence of the Church on the State. Church and State were legally distinct during the mediæval period, however closely they may have been allied in practice. With the arrival of Protestantism and the backing of the reformed religion given by certain of the Princes, the machinery of intolerance, so to speak, was taken over by the State and became one of its functions. It became as much the duty of the secular officials to extirpate heresy, to secure uniformity of religious belief as it was to the interest of the Church to see that it was destroyed. Up to that time it was the aim of the Church to make the State one of its departments. It had never legally succeeded in doing this, but it was not for the Roman Church to sink to the subordinate position of becoming a department of the State. It was left for Protestantism to make the Church a branch of the State and to give religious bigotry the full sanction of secular law.

[3] See on this point Heeren's *Historical Treatises*, 1836, pp. 61-70.

Neither with Catholic nor Protestant could there be, therefore, any relaxation in the opposition offered to independent thinking. That still remained the cardinal offence to the religious mind. In the name of religion Protestants opposed the physics of Newton as bitterly as Catholics opposed the physics of Galileo. The geology of Hutton and Lyell, the chemistry of Boyle and Dalton, the biology of Von Baer, Lamarck and Darwin, with almost any other branch of science that one cares to select, tell the same tale. And when the desire for reform took a social turn there was the same influence to be fought. For while the Roman Catholic laid the chief insistence on obedience to the Church, the Protestant laid as strong insistence on obedience to the State, and made disobedience to its orders a matter of almost religious revolt. The whole force of religion was thus used to induce contentment with the existing order, instead of to the creation of an intelligent discontent which would lead to continuous improvement. In view of these circumstances it is not surprising that the word "Freethought" should have lost in actual use its more general significance of a denial of the place of mere authority in matters of opinion, and have acquired a more definite and precise connotation. It could not, of course, lose its general meaning, but it gained a special application and became properly associated with a definitely anti-theological attitude. The growth in this direction was gradual but inevitable. When the term first came into general use, about the end of the seventeenth century, it was mainly used with reference to those deists who were then attacking Christianity. In that sense it continued to be used for some time. But as Deism lost ground, thanks partly to the Christian attack, the clear and logical issue between Theism and Atheism became apparent, with the result that the definite anti-

religious character of " Freethought " became firmly established. And to-day it is mere affectation or timidity to pretend that the word has any other vital significance. To say that a man is a Freethinker is to give, to ninety-nine people out of a hundred, the impression that he is anti-religious. And in this direction the popular sense of the word discloses what has been its important historic function. Historically, the chief stronghold of mere authority has been religion. In science and in sociology, as well as in connection with supernaturalism proper, every movement in the direction of the free exercise of the intellect has met with the unceasing opposition of religion. That has always been at once the symbol and the instrument of oppression. To attack religion has been to attack the enemy in his capital. All else has been matter of outpost skirmishing.

I have apparently gone a long way round to get at the meaning of the word " Freethought," but it was necessary. For it is of very little use, in the case of an important word that has stood and stands for the name of a movement, to go to a dictionary, or to appeal to etymology. The latter has often a mere antiquarian interest, and the former merely registers current meanings, it does not make them. The use of a word must ultimately be determined by the ideas it conveys to those who hear it. And from what has been said the meaning of this particular word should be fairly clear. While standing historically for a reasoned protest against the imposition of opinion by authority, and, negatively, against such artificial conditions as prevent the free circulation of opinion, it to-day stands actually for a definitely anti-religious mental attitude. And this is what one would naturally expect. Protests, after all, are protests against something in the concrete, even though they may embody the affirma-

tion of an abstract principle. And nowadays the principle of pure authority has so few defenders that it would be sheer waste of time, unless the protest embodied a definite attitude with regard to specific questions. We may, then, put it that to us "Freethought" stands for a reasoned and definite opposition to all forms of supernaturalism, it claims the right to subject all religious beliefs to the test of reason, and further claims that when so tested they break down hopelessly. It is from this point of view that these pages are written, and the warranty for so defining it should be apparent from what has been said in this and the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

REBELLION AND REFORM.

REBELLION and reform are not exactly twins, but they are very closely related. For while all rebellion is not reform, yet in the widest sense of the word, there is no reform without rebellion. To fight for reform is to rebel against the existing order and is part of the eternal and fundamentally healthful struggle of the new against the old, and of the living present against the dead past. The rebel is thus at once a public danger and a benefactor. He threatens the existing order, but it is in the name of a larger and better social life. And because of this it is his usual lot to be crucified when living and deified when dead. So it has always been, so in its main features will it always be. If contemporaries were to recognize the reformer as such, they would destroy his essential function by making it useless. Improvement would become an automatic process that would perfect itself without opposition. As it is, the function of the rebel is to act as an explosive force, and no society of average human beings likes explosions. They are noisy, and they are dangerous. For the reformer to complain at not being hailed as a deliverer is for him to mistake his part and place in social evolution.

The rebel and the reformer is, again, always in minority. That follows from what has already been said. It follows, too, from what we know of development in general. Darwinism rests on the supreme importance of the minority. It is an odd variation here and there that acts as the starting point for a new

species—and it has against it the swamping influence of the rest of its kind that treads the old biological line. Nature's choicest variations are of necessity with the few, and when that variation has established itself and become normal another has to appear before a new start can be made.

Whether we take biology or psychology the same condition appears. A new idea occurs to an individual and it is as strictly a variation from the normal as anything that occurs in the animal world. The idea may form the starting point of a new theory, or perhaps of a new social order. But to establish itself, to become the characteristic property of the group, it must run the gamut of persecution and the risk of suppression. And suppressed it often is—for a time. It is an idle maxim which teaches that truth always conquers, if by that is implied that it does so at once. That is not the truth. Lies have been victorious over and over again. The Roman Catholic Church, one of the greatest lies in the history of the human race, stood the conqueror for many centuries. The teaching of the rotundity of the earth and its revolution round the sun was suppressed for hundreds of years until it was revived in the 16th century. In the long run truth does emerge, but a lie may have a terribly lengthy innings. For the lie is accepted by the many, while the truth is seen only by the few. But it is the few to whom we turn when we look over the names of those who have made the world what is it. All the benefits to society come from the few, and society crucifies them to show its gratitude. One may put it that society lives on the usual, but flourishes on account of the exception.

Now there is something extremely significant in the Christian religion tracing all the disasters of mankind to a primal act of disobedience. It is a fact which discloses in a flash the chief social function of religion

in general and of Christianity in particular. Man's duty is summed up in the one word obedience, and the function of the (religiously) good man is to obey the commands of God, as that of the good citizen is to obey the commands of government. The two commands meet and supplement each other with the mutual advantage which results from the adjustment of the upper and lower jaws of a hyena. And it explains why the powers that be have always favoured the claims of religion. It enabled them to rally to their aid the tremendous and stupefying aid of religion and to place rebellion to their orders on the same level as rebellion against God. In Christian theology Satan is the arch-rebel; hell is full of rebellious angels and disobedient men and women. Heaven is reserved for the timid, the tame, the obedient, the sheep-like. When the Christ of the Gospels divides the people into goats and sheep, it is the former that go to hell, and the latter to heaven. The Church has not a rebel in its calendar, although it has not a few rogues and many fools. To the Church rebellion is always a sin, save on those rare occasions when revolt is ordered in the interests of the Church itself. In Greek mythology Prometheus steals fire from heaven for the benefit of man and suffers in consequence. The myth symbolizes the fact. Always the man has had to win knowledge and happiness in the teeth of opposition from the gods. Always the race has owed its progress to the daring of the rebel or of the rebellious few.

Often the Freethinker is denounced because he is destructive or dangerous. What other is he expected to be? And would he be of much use if he were otherwise?? I would go further and say that he is the most destructive of all agencies because he is so intimately concerned with the handling of the most destructive of weapons—ideas. We waste a good deal of time in

denouncing certain people as dangerous when they are in reality comparatively harmless. A man throws a bomb, or breaks into a house, or robs one of a purse, and a judge solemnly denounces him as a most "dangerous member of society." It is all wrong. These are comparatively harmless individuals. One man throws a bomb, kills a few people, damages some property, and there the matter ends. Another man comes along and drops instead of a bomb a few ideas, and the whole country is in a state of eruption. Charles Peace pursues a career of piety and crime, gets himself comfortably and religiously hanged, and society congratulates itself on having got rid of a dangerous person, and then forgets all about it. Karl Marx visits England, prowls round London studying the life of rich and poor, and drops *Das Kapital* on us. A quiet and outwardly inoffensive individual, one who never gave the police a moment's anxiety, spends years studying earthworms, and flowers, and horses and cats, and all sorts of moving things and presents society with *The Origin of Species*. Organized society found itself able to easily guard itself against the attacks of men such as Charles Peace, it may with impunity extend its hospitality to the thrower of bombs, or robber of houses, but by what means can it protect itself against the "peaceful" Marx or the "harmless" Darwin? No society can afford to ignore in its midst a score of original or independent thinkers, or if society does ignore them they will not for long ignore society. The thinker is really destructive. He destroys because he creates; he creates because he destroys. The one is the obverse of the other.

I am not making idle play with the word "destruction." It is literally true that in human society the most destructive and the most coercive forces at work are ideas. They strike at established

institutions and demand either their modification or their removal. That is why the emergence of a new idea is always an event of social significance. Whether it be a good idea or a bad one will not affect the truth of this statement. For over four years our political mediocrities and muddle headed militarists were acting as though the real problem before them was to establish the superiority of one armed group of men over another group. That was really a simple matter. The important issue which society had to face was the ideas that the shock of the war must give rise to. Thinkers saw this; but thinkers do not get the public ear either as politicians or militarists. And now events are driving home the lesson. The ideas of Bolshevism and Sinn Feinism proved far more " dangerous " than the German armies. The Allied forces could handle the one, but they were powerless before the other. It is not a question of whether these particular ideas are good or bad, or whether we approve or disapprove of them, but entirely one that, being ideas, they represent a far more " destructive " power than either bomb or gun. They are at once the forces that act as the cement of society and those that may hurl it into chaotic fragments.

Whether an idea will survive or not must, in the end, be determined by circumstances, but in itself a new idea may be taken as the mental analogue of the variation which takes place in physical structures, and which forms the raw material of natural selection. And if that is so, it is evident that any attempt to prevent the play of new ideas on old institutions is striking at the very fact of progress. For if we are to encourage variation we must permit it in all directions, up as well as down, for evil as well as for good. You cannot check variation in one direction without checking it in all. You cannot prevent the

appearance of a new idea that you do not want without threatening the appearance of a number of ideas that you would eagerly welcome. It is, therefore, always better to encourage the appearance of a bad idea than it is to risk the suppression of a good one. Besides, it is not always that force applied to the suppression of ideas succeeds in its object. What it often does is to cause the persecuted idea to assume a more violent form, to ensure a more abrupt break with the past than would otherwise occur, with the risk of a period of reaction before orderly progress is resumed. The only way to silence an idea is to answer it. You cannot reply to a belief with bullets, or bayonet a theory into silence. History contains many lessons, but none that is plainer than this one, and none that religious and secular tyrannies learn with greater reluctance.

The Churches admit by their practice the truth of what has been said. They have always understood that the right way to keep society in a stationary position is to prevent the introduction of new ideas. It is thought against which they have warred, the thinker against whom they have directed their deadliest weapons. The Christian Church has been tolerant towards the criminal, and has always been intolerant towards the heretic and the Freethinker. For the latter the flaming *auto da fé,* for the former the moderate penance and the "go, and sin no more." The worst of its tortures were neither created for nor applied to the thief and the assassin, but were specially designed for the unbeliever. In this the Church acted with a sure instinct. The thief threatens no institution, not even that of private property. "Thou shalt not steal" is as much the law of a thieves' kitchen as it is of Mayfair. But Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Lyell, Darwin,

these are the men who convey a threat in all they write, who destroy and create with a splendour that smacks of the power with which Christians have endowed their mythical deity. No aggregation of criminals has ever threatened the security of the Church, or even disturbed its serenity. On the contrary, the worse, morally, the time, the greater the influence of Christianity. It flourishes on human weakness and social vice as the bacilli of tuberculosis do in darkness and dirt. It is when weakness gives place to strength, and darkness to light that the Church finds its power weakening. The Church could forgive the men who instituted the black slave trade, she could forgive those who were responsible for the horrors of the English factory system, but she could never forgive the writer of the *Age of Reason*. She has always known how to distinguish her friends from her foes.

Right or wrong, then, the heretic, the Freethinker, represents a figure of considerable social significance. His social value does not lie wholly in the fact of his opinions being sound or his judgment impeccable. Mere revolt or heresy can never carry that assurance with it. The important thing about the rebel is that he represents a spirit, a temper, in the absence of which society would stagnate. It is bad when people revolt without cause, but it is infinitely better that a people should revolt without cause than that they should have cause for rebellion without possessing the courage of a kick. That man should have the courage to revolt against the thing which he believes to be wrong is of infinitely greater consequence than that he should be right in condemning the thing against which he revolts. Whether the rebel is right or wrong time and consequence alone can tell, but nothing can make good the evil of a community re-

duced to sheep-like acquiescence in whatever may be imposed upon them. The "Their's not to reason why" attitude, however admirable in an army, is intolerable and dangerous in social life. Replying to those who shrieked about the "horrors" of the French Revolution, and who preached the virtue of patriotic obedience to established authority, Carlyle, with an eye on Ireland, sarcastically admitted that the "horrors" were very bad indeed, but he added:—

> What if history somewhere on this planet were to hear of a nation, the third soul of whom had not for thirty weeks of each year as many third-rate potatoes as would sustain him? History in that case, feels bound to consider that starvation is starvation; that starvation presupposes much; history ventures to assert that the French Sansculotte of Nine-three, who roused from a long death sleep, could rush at once to the frontiers and die fighting for an immortal hope and faith of deliverance for him and his, was but the *second* miserablest of men.

And that same history, looking back through the ages, is bound to confess that it is to the great rebels, from Satan onward, that the world mainly owes whatever of greatness or happiness it has achieved.

One other quality of the rebel remains to be noted. In his revolt against established authority, in his determination to wreck cherished institutions for the realization of an ideal, the rebel is not the representative of an anti-social idea or of an anti-social force. He is the true representative of the strongest of social influences. The very revolt against the social institutions that exist is in the name and for the realization of a larger and a better social order that he hopes to create. A man who is ready to sacrifice his life in the pursuit of an ideal cannot, whatever else he may be

accused of, be reasonably accused of selfishness or of a want of " social consciousness." He is a vital expression of the centuries of social life which have gone before and which have made us all what we are. Were his social sense weaker he would risk less. Were he selfish he would not trouble about the conversion of his fellows. The spirit of revolt represents an important factor in the process of social development, and they who are most strenuous in their denunciation of social control, are often, even though unconsciously, the strongest evidence of its overpowering influence.

Fed as we are with the mental food prepared by our Churches and governments, to whose interests it is that the rebel and the Freethinker should be decried and denounced, we are all too apt to overlook the significance of the rebel. Yet he is invariably the one who voices what the many are afraid or unable to express. The masses suffer dumbly, and the persistence of their suffering breeds a sense of its inevitability. It is only when these dumb masses find a voice that they threaten the established order, and for this the man of ideas is essential. That is why all vested interests, religious and social, hate him so heartily. They recognize that of all the forces with which they deal an idea is the greatest and the most untamable. Once in being it is the most difficult to suppress. It is more explosive than dynamite and more shattering in its effects. Physical force may destroy a monarch, but it is only the force of an idea that can destroy a monarchy. You may destroy a church with cannon, but cannon are powerless against Church doctrines. An idea comes as near realizing the quality of indestructibility as anything we know. You may quiet anything in the world with greater ease than you may reduce a strong thinker to silence, or subdue anything with greater facility than you may

subdue the idea that is born of strenuous thought. Fire may be extinguished and strife made to cease, ambition may be killed and the lust for power grow faint. The one thing that defies all and that finally conquers is the truth which strong men see and for which brave men fight.

It is thus left for the philosophy of Freethought, comprehensive here as elsewhere, to find a place for the rebel and to recognize the part he plays in the evolution of the race. For rebellion roots itself ultimately in the spirit of mental independence. And that whether a particular act of revolt may be justifiable or not. It is bred of the past, but it looks forward hopefully and fearlessly to the future, and it sees in the present the material out of which that better future may be carved. That the mass of people find in the rebel someone whom it is moved to suppress is in no wise surprising. New things are not at first always pleasant, even though they may be necessary. But the temper of mind from which rebellion springs is one that society can only suppress at its peril.

CHAPTER V.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE CHILD.

If the truth of what has been said above be admitted, it follows that civilization has two fundamental aspects. On the one side there is the environment, made up—so far as civilized humanity is concerned—of the ideas, the beliefs, the customs, and the stored up knowledge of preceding generations, and on the other side we have an organism which in virtue of its education responds to the environmental stimuli in a given manner. Between the man of to-day and the man of an earlier generation the vital distinction is not that the present day one is, as an organism, better, that he has keener sight, or stronger muscles, or a brain of greater capacity, but that he has a truer perception of things, and in virtue of his enlarged knowledge is able to mould natural forces, including the impulses of his own nature, in a more desirable manner. And he can do this because, as I have already said, he inherits what previous generations have acquired, and so reaps the benefits of what they have done.

We may illustrate this in a very simple manner. One of the most striking differences between the man of to-day and the man of the past is the attitude of the two in relation to natural phenomena. To the people of not so many generations ago an eclipse was a very serious thing, fraught with the promise of disaster to mankind. The appearance of a comet was no less

ominous. John Knox saw in comets an indication of the wrath of heaven, and in all countries the Churches fought with all their might against the growth of the scientific view. Away back in antiquity we meet with the same view. There is, for example, the classic case of the Greek general Nikias, who, when about to extricate his army from a dangerous position before Syracuse, was told that an eclipse of the sun indicated that the gods wished him to stay where he was for three times nine days. Nikias obeyed the oracles with the result that his army was captured. Now it is certain that no general to-day would act in that manner, and if he did it is equally certain that he would be court-martialled. Equally clear is it that comets and eclipses have ceased to infect the modern mind with terror, and are now only objects of study to the learned, and of curiosity to the unlearned. But the difference here is entirely one of knowledge. Our ancestors reacted to the appearance of a comet or an eclipse in a particular manner because their knowledge of these things was of a certain kind. It was not at all a case of feeling, or of degree of feeling, or of having a better brain, but simply a matter of reacting to an environmental influence in terms of an understanding of certain things. Had we the same conception of these things that our ancestors had we should react in the same manner. We act differently because our understanding of things is different. We may put it briefly that the kind of reaction which we make to the things around us is mainly determined by our knowledge concerning their nature.

There is one other fact that brings into prominence the importance of the kind of reaction which we make to environmental stimuli. Put briefly, we may say that an important distinction between the animal and man is that the animal passes its existence in a com-

paratively simple environment where the experiences are few in kind and often repeated, whereas with man the environment is very complex, the experiences are varied in character, and may be only repeated after long intervals. The consequence is that in order to get through life an animal needs a few simple instincts which automatically respond to frequently repeated experiences, while on the other hand there must be with man opportunity for the kind of response which goes under the name of intelligent action. It is this which gives us the reason, or the explanation, why of all animals the human being is born the most helpless, and why he remains helpless for a longer period than does any other. The prolonged infancy is the opportunity given to the human being to acquire the benefits of education and so to reap the full advantage of that social heritage which, as we have shown, raises him so far above the level of past generations. Or we may express the matter with the late Professor Fiske, who was the first, I think, to dwell at length upon this phenomenon, that the distinction between man and the animal world is that in the one case we have developed instincts with small capacity for education, in the other few instincts with great capacity for education.

It is often said that the Churches have failed to pay attention to education, or have not taken it seriously. That is quite wrong. It may, indeed, be said that they have never failed to attend to education, and have always taken it seriously—with disastrous results to education and to social life. Ever since the birth of the modern movement for education the Church has fought hard to maintain its control of schools, and there is every reason why this should be so. Survival in the animal world may be secured in two ways. On the one side we may have a continuance of a special

sort of environment to which a given structure is properly adapted; on the other there may be a modification of the animal to meet the demands of a changing environment.

Applying this principle to the question of the Churches and education the moral is clear. The human environment changes more than that of any other animal. The mere amassing of experience and its expression in the form of new institutions or in the modification of already existing ones, is enough to effect a change in the environment of successive generations. The Christian Church, or for the matter of that, any form of religion, has before it two possible courses. Either it must maintain an environment that is as little as possible unchanged, or it must modify its body of teaching to meet the changed surroundings. As a mere matter of fact both processes go on side by side, but consciously the Churches have usually followed the course of trying to maintain an unchanged environment. This is the real significance of the attempt of the more orthodox to boycott new, or heretical literature, or lectures, or to produce a "religious atmosphere" round the child. It is an attempt to create an environment to which the child's mind will respond in a manner that is favourable to the claims and teachings of the Christian Church. The Church dare not openly and plainly throw overboard its body of doctrines to meet the needs of the modern mind; and the only thing remaining is to keep the modern mind as backward as possible in order that it may rest content with a teaching that is reminiscent of a past stage of civilization.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the struggle for the child is essentially a modern phrase. So long as the teaching of religion is in, at least, a working harmony with current knowledge and the

general body of the social forces the question of religious instruction does not emerge. Life itself—social life that is—to a very considerable extent enforces religious teaching. At all events it does not violently contradict it. But as, owing to the accumulation of knowlelge, views of the world and of man develop that are not in harmony with accepted religious teaching, the Churches are forced to attempt the maintenance of an environment of a special religious kind to which their teaching is adapted. Hence the growing prominence of the division of secular and sacred as things that have to do with religion and things that have not. Hence, too, the importance to the Churches of acquiring power over the child's mind before it is brought completely under the influence of an environment in which orthodox teachings can only present themselves as a gross anachronism.

Thus, one may say with absolute confidence that if in a modern environment a child was left free with regard to modern influences there is nothing that would lead to an acceptance of religion. Our ancestors grew up familiar with the idea of the miraculous and the supernatural generally because there was nothing in the existing knowledge of the world that contradicted it. But what part is there in the general education of the child in modern society that would lead to that end? So far as it is taught anything about the world it learns to regard it in terms of causation and of positive knowledge. It finds itself surrounded with machinery, and inventions, and with a thousand and one mechanical and other inventions which do not in the very remotest degree suggest the supernatural. In other words, the response of a modern child in a modern environment is of a strictly non-religious kind. Left alone it would no more become religious in the sense of believing in the religious teachings of any of

the Churches than it would pass through life looking for miracles or accepting fairy tales as sober statements of historic fact. It would no more express itself in terms of religion than it would describe an eclipse in the language of our ancestors of five hundred years ago.

In self defence the Churches are thus bound to make a fight for the possession of the child. They cannot wait, because that means allowing the child to grow to maturity and then dealing with it when it is able to examine religion with some regard to its historic evolution, and with a due appreciation of the hopelessly unscientific character of the conception of the supernatural. They must, so far as they can, protect the growing child from the influence of all those environmental forces that make for the disintegration of religious beliefs. The only way in which the Churches can at all make sure of a supply of recruits is by impressing them before they are old enough to resist. As the Germany of the Kaiser is said to have militarized the nation by commencing with the schools, so the Churches hope to keep the nations religious by commencing with the children. Apart from these considerations there is no reason why religion could not wait, as other subjects wait, till the child is old enough to understand and appreciate it. But with the Churches it is literally the child or nothing.

From the point of view of citizenship the retention of religion in State schools is a manifest injustice. If ever religious instruction could be justified in any circumstances it is when the religion taught represents at least the professed beliefs of the whole of the people. But that is clearly not the case to-day. Only a section of the people can be called, even formally, Christian. Large numbers are quite opposed to Christianity, and large numbers deliberately reject all religion. How,

then, can the State undertake the teaching of a religion without at the same time rousing resentment in and inflicting an injustice on a large number of its members? It cannot be done, and the crowning absurdity is that the State acknowledges the non-essential character of religion by permitting all who will to go without. In secular subjects it permits no such option. It says that all children shall receive certain tuition in certain subjects for a given period. It makes instruction in these subjects compulsory on the definite and intelligible ground that the education given is necessary to the intelligent discharge of the duties of citizenship. It does not do that in the case of religion, and it dare not do that. No government to-day would have the impudence to say that discharge of the duties of citizenship is dependent upon acceptance of the Athanasian Creed, or upon the belief in the Bible, or in an after life. And not being able to say this it is driven to the absurd position of, on the one hand saying to the people, that religion shall be taught in the State schools, and on the other, if one doesn't care to have it he may leave it alone without suffering the slightest disqualification.

Indeed, it is impossible for instruction in religion to be genuinely called education at all. If I may be allowed to repeat what I have said elsewhere on this subject, one may well ask: —

> What is it that the genuine educationalist aims at? The imparting of knowledge is, of course, essential. But, in the main, education consists in a wholesome training of mind and body, in forming habits of cleanliness, truthfulness, honesty, kindness, the development of a sense of duty and of justice. Can it be said in truth that what is called religious instruction does these things, or that instruction in them is actually inseparable from religion? Does the creation

of a religious "atmosphere," the telling of stories of God or Jesus or angels or devils—I omit hell—have any influence in the direction of cultivating a sound mind in a sound body? Will anyone contend that the child has even a passing understanding of subjects over which all adults are more or less mystified? To confuse is not to instruct, to mystify is not to enlighten, the repetition of meaningless phrases can leave behind no healthy residuum in the mind. It is the development of capacity along right lines that is important, not the mere cramming of verbal formulæ. Above all, it is the function of the true teacher to make his pupil independent of him. The aim of the priest is to keep one eternally dependent upon his ministrations. The final and fatal criticism upon religious instruction is that it is not education at all.

It may be argued that a policy of creating sentiments in favour of certain things not wholly understood by the child is followed in connection with matters other than religion. We do not wait until a child is old enough to appreciate the intellectual justification of ethics to train it in morals. And in many directions we seek to develop some tendencies and to suppress others in accordance with an accepted standard. All this may be admitted as quite true, but it may be said in reply that these are things for which an adequate reason *can* be given, and we are sure of the child's approbation when it is old enough to appreciate what has been done. But in the case of religion the situation is altogether different. We are here forcing upon the child as true, as of the same admitted value as ordinary ethical teaching, certain religious doctrines about which adults themselves dispute with the greatest acrimony. And there is clearly a wide and vital distinction between cultivating in a child sentiments the validity of which may at any time be demonstrated, or teachings upon the truth of which practically all adults are agreed, and impressing upon it teachings which all agree may be false. We are exploiting the child in the interests of

> a Church. Parents are allowing themselves to be made the catspaws of priests; and it is not the least formidable of the counts against the Church's influence that it converts into active enemies of children those who should stand as their chief protectors. It is religion which makes it true that "a *child's* foes shall be those of his own household." [1]

Where the claim to force religion upon the child breaks down on such grounds as those outlined above it is quite certain that it cannot be made good upon any other ground. Historically, it is also clear that we do not find that conduct was better in those ages when the Christian religion was held most unquestioningly, but rather the reverse. The moralization of the world has, as a matter of historic fact, kept pace with the secularizing of life. This is true both as regards theory and fact. The application of scientific methods to ethical problems has taught us more of the nature of morality in the short space of three or four generations than Christian teaching did in a thousand years. And it is not with an expansion of the power and influence of religion that conduct has undergone an improvement, but with the bringing of people together in terms of secular relationships and reducing their religious beliefs to the level of speculative ideas which men may hold or reject as they think fit, so long as they do not allow them to influence their relations to one another.

On all grounds it is urgent that the child should be rescued from the clutches of the priest. It is unfair to the child to so take advantage of its trust, its innocence, and its ignorance, and to force upon it as true teachings that which we must all admit may be false, and which, in a growing number of cases, the

[1] *Religion and the Child,* Pioneer Press.

child when it grows up either rejects absolutely or considerably modifies. It is unjust to the principle upon which the modern State rests, because it is teaching the speculative beliefs of a few with money raised from the taxation of all. The whole tendency of life in the modern State is in the direction of secularization—confining the duties and activities of the State to those actions which have their meaning and application to this life. Every argument that is valid against the State forcing religion upon the adult is valid also against the State forcing religion upon the child. And, on the other hand, it is really absurd to say that religion must be forced upon the child, but we are outraging the rights of the individual and perpetuating an intolerable wrong if we force it upon the adult. Surely the dawning and developing individuality of the child has claims on the community that are not less urgent than those of the adult.

Finally, the resolve to rescue the child from the clutches of the priest is in the interest of civilization itself. All human experience shows that a civilization that is under the control of a priesthood is doomed. From the days of ancient Egypt there is no exception to this rule. And sooner or later a people, if they are to progress, are compelled to attempt to limit the control of the priest over life. The whole of the struggle of the Reformation was fundamentally for the control of the secular power—whether life should or should not be under the control of the Church. In that contest, over a large part of Europe, the Roman Church lost. But the victory was only a very partial one. It was never complete. The old priest was driven out, but the new Presbyter remained, and he was but the old tyrant in another form. Ever since then the fight has gone on, and ever since, the Protestant minister, equally with the Catholic priest, has striven for the

control of education and so to dominate the mind of the rising generation. The fight for the liberation of the child is thus a fight for the control or the directing of civilization. It is a question of whether we are to permit the priest to hold the future to ransom by permitting this control of the child, or whether we are to leave religious beliefs, as we leave other beliefs of a speculative character, to such a time as the child is old enough to understand them. It is a fight for the future of civilization.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NATURE OF RELIGION.

It is no mere paradox to say that religion is most interesting to those who have ceased to believe in it. The reason for this is not far to seek. Religious beliefs play so large a part in the early history of society, and are so influential in social history generally, that it is impossible to leave religion alone without forfeiting an adequate comprehension of a large part of social evolution. Human development forms a continuous record; our institutions, whatever be their nature, have their roots in the far past, and often, even when modified in form, retain their essential characteristics. No student of social history can travel far or dig deeply without finding himself in contact with religion in some form. And the mass of mankind are not yet so far removed from "primitive" humanity as to give to the study of religion an exclusively archæological interest.

Where so much is discord it is well, if it be possible, to start with a basis of agreement. And on one point, at least, there is substantial unity among critics. There is a general agreement among students of folk lore, comparative mythology, and anthropology, that religious ideas rest ultimately upon an interpretation of nature that is now generally discarded. Differing as they do on details, there is consent upon this point. It is the world of the savage that originates the religion of the savage, and upon that

rests the religions of civilized man as surely as his physical structure goes back to the animal world for its beginning. And in giving birth to a religious explanation of his world the savage was only pursuing the normal path of human development. Mankind progresses through trial and error; doubtful and erroneous theories are framed before more reliable ones are established, and while truth may crown our endeavours it seldom meets us at the outset. Religious beliefs thus form man's earliest interpretation of nature. On this there is, as I have said, general agreement, and it is as well not to permit ourselves to lose sight of that in the discussion of the various theories that are put forward as to the exact nature of the stages of religious development.

In many directions the less accurate theories of things are replaced gradually and smoothly by more reliable explanations. But in religion this is not so. For many reasons, with which we are not now immediately concerned, religious beliefs are not outgrown without considerable "growing pains." And a long time after the point of view from which religious beliefs sprang has been given up, the conclusions that were based on that point of view are held to most tenaciously. And yet if one accepts the scientific story of the origins of religious ideas there seems no justification whatever for this. Religion cannot transcend its origin. Multiply nothing to infinity and the result is still nothing. Illusion can beget nothing but illusion, even though in its pursuit we may stumble on reality. And no amount of ingenuity can extract truth from falsehood.

One's surprise at the perpetuation of this particular delusion is diminished by the reflection that the period during which we have possessed anything like an exact knowledge of the character and operations of natural

forces is, after all, but an infinitesimal portion of the time the race has been in existence. Three or four centuries at most cover the period during which such knowledge has been at our command, and small as this is in relation to the thousands of generations wherein superstition has reigned unchallenged, a knowledge of the laws of mental life belongs only to the latter portion. And even then the knowledge available has been till recently the possession of a class, while to-day, large masses of the population are under the domination of the crudest of superstitions. The belief that thirteen is an unlucky number, that a horse-shoe brings luck, the extent to which palmistry and astrology flourishes, the cases of witchcraft that crop up every now and again, all bear testimony to the vast mass of superstition that is still with us. The primitive mind is still alive and active, disguised though it may be by a veneer of civilization and a terribly superficial education. And when one reflects upon all the facts there is cause for astonishment that in the face of so great a dead weight of custom and tradition against a rational interpretation of the universe so much has been done and in so short a time.

In discussing religion very much turns upon the meaning of the word, and unfortunately "religion" is to-day used in so many differing and conflicting senses that without the most careful definition no one is quite sure what is meant by it. The curious disinclination of so many to avow themselves as being without a religion must also be noted. To be without a religion, or rather to be known as one who is without a religion, would seem to mark one off as apart from the rest of one's kind, and to infringe all the tribal taboos at one sweep. And very few seem to have the courage to stand alone. Mr. Augustine Birrell once said, in introducing to the House of Commons an

Education Bill, that children would rather be wicked than singular. That is quite true, and it is almost as true of adults as it is of children. There is no great objection to having a religion different from that of other people, because the religions of the world are already of so varied a character that there is always companionship in difference. But to be without a religion altogether is a degree of isolation that few can stand. The consequence is that although vast numbers have given up everything that is really religious they still cling to the name. They have left the service, but they show a curious attachment to the uniform. Thus it happens that we have a religion of Socialism, a religion of Ethics, etc., and I should not be surprised to find one day a religion of Atheism—if that has not already appeared.

But all this is a mistake, and a very serious mistake. The Freethinker, or Socialist, who calls his theory of life a religion is not causing the religionist to think more highly of him, he is making his opponent think more highly of his own opinions. Imitation becomes in such a case not alone flattery, but confirmation. The Goddite does not think more highly of Freethought because it is labelled religion, he merely becomes the more convinced of the supreme value of his own faith, and still hopes for the Freethinker's return to the fold. If Freethinkers are to command the respect of the religious world they must show not only that they can get along without religion, but that they can dispense with the name also. If strength does not command respect weakness will certainly fail to secure it. And those of us who are genuinely anxious that the world should be done with false ideas and mischievous frames of mind ought to at least take care that our own speech and thought are as free from ambiguity as is possible.

There is another and deeper aspect of the matter. As I have already said, language not alone expresses thought, it also governs and directs it. Locke expressed this truth when he said, "It is impossible that men should ever truly seek, or certainly discover, the disagreement of ideas themselves whilst their thoughts flutter about, or stick only on sounds of doubtful and uncertain significance." Quite a number of theological and metaphysical conundrums would lose their significance if it were only realized that the words used are not alone of doubtful and uncertain significance, but often of no possible significance whatever. They are like counterfeit coins, which retain their value only so long as they are not tested by a proper standard. And the evil of these counterfeits is that they deceive both those who tender and those who accept them. For even though slovenliness of speech is not always the product of slovenly thought, in the long run it tends to induce it, and those who realize this need to be specially on their guard against using language which can only further confuse an already sufficiently confused public opinion, and strengthen superstitions that are already sufficiently strong without our clandestine or unintended assistance.[1]

Unfortunately, it remains a favourite policy with many writers to use and define the word religion, not in accordance with a comprehensive survey of facts, but in a way that will harmonize with existing prepossessions. To this class belongs Matthew Arnold's

[1] Of the evil of an incautious use of current words we have an example in the case of Darwin. Neither his expressions of regret at having "truckled to public opinion" at having used the term "creator," nor his explicit declaration that the word was to him only a synonym of ignorance, prevented religious apologists from citing him as a believer in deity on the strength of his having used the word.

famous definition of religion as "Morality touched with emotion," Professor Seeley's statement that we are entitled to call religion "any habitual and permanent admiration," or the common description of religion as consisting in devotion to an ideal. All such definitions may be set on one side as historically worthless, and as not harmonizing with the facts. Arnold's definition is in the highest degree superficial, since there exists no morality that is not touched with emotion, and on the other hand there exist phases of religion that have not any connection with morality, however slight. Professor Leuba properly rules definitions of this class out of order in the comment that, as it is "the function of words to delimitate, one defeats the purpose of language by stretching the meaning of a word until it has lost all precision and unity of meaning.[2] A definition that includes everything may as well, for all the use it is, not cover anything.

Equally faulty are those definitions that are based upon an assumed conscious effort to explain the mysteries of existence. No stranger lapse ever overtook a great thinker than occurred to Herbert Spencer when he described religion as consisting in a worship of the unknowable, and as due to the desire to explain a mystery ever pressing for interpretation. Granting the existence of an Unknowable, the sense of its presence belongs to the later stages of mental evolution, not to the earlier ones. Metaphysical and mystical theories of religion are indications of its disintegration, not of its beginnings. Primitive man began to believe in ghosts and gods for the same reasons that he believed in other things; he worshipped his gods for very concrete considerations. Even the distinction between "spiritual" and material exist-

[2] *The Psychological Origin and Nature of Religion*, p. 92.

ence is quite foreign to his mind. Such distinctions arise gradually with the progress of knowledge and its disintegrating influence on inherited beliefs. If primitive man may be credited with a philosophy, and if one may use the word in a purely convenient sense, then one may say that he is neither a dualist, nor a pluralist, but a monist. The soul or double he believes in is similar to the body he sees; the unseen forces he credits with various activities are of the same kind as those with which he is acquainted. To read our conceptions into the mind of primitive man because we use our words to explain his thoughts is a procedure that is bound to end in confusion. Man's earliest conception of things is vague and indefinite. Later, he distinguishes differences, qualitative and quantitative, his conception of things becomes more definite, and distinctions are set up that lay the foundations of science and philosophy, and which mark their separation from religion.

So far as one can see there are only two causes why people should continue to use the word religion after giving up all for which it properly stands. One is sheer conservatism. When, for instance, Thomas Paine said, "To do good is my religion," he had at least the justification of believing in a deity, but apart from this the only cause for his calling the desire to do good a religion is that there had grown up the fashion of calling one's rule of life a religion. The other cause is the ill-repute that has been attached to those who avow themselves as being without religion. Orthodoxy saw to it that they were treated as pariahs without social status, and, in many cases, legal rights. Once upon a time it was useless unless one believed in the *right* religion. Nowadays, any religion will do, or anything that one cares to call a religion. But not to have any religion at all still puts one outside the pale

of respectability, and there seem to be few who can stand that. And supernatural religion—the only genuine article—being impossible with many, these may still, if they care to, save their face by professing to use the name, even if they have not the thing. Orthodoxy is very accommodating nowadays.

Leaving for a time the question of how religion actually does arise, we may turn to those writers who define religion in terms of ethics. It may be admitted that so far as the later stages of religion are concerned considerable emphasis is laid upon ethics. But we can only make religion a part of ethics by expanding the term morality so as to include everything, or by contracting it so as to exclude all the lower forms of religious belief. And any definition of religion that does not embrace all its forms is obviously inaccurate. It is not at all a question of defining the higher in terms of the lower, or the lower in terms of the higher, it is simply the need of so defining religion that our definition will cover all religions, high and low, and thus deal with their essential characteristics.

The only sense in which ethics may be said to be included in religion lies in the fact that in primitive times religion includes everything. The fear of unseen intelligences is one of the most powerful factors of which early humanity is conscious, and the necessity for conciliating them is always present. The religious ceremonies connected with eating and drinking, with lying down and rising up, with sowing and reaping, with disease, hunting, and almost every circumstance of primitive life prove this. Differentiation and discrimination arise very slowly, but one after another the various departments of life do shake off the controlling influence of religion. Ethics may, therefore, be said to originate in the shadow of religion—as do

most other things—but in no sense can morality be said to owe its origin to religion. Its origin is deeper and more fundamental than religion. As a matter of practice morality is independent of religious belief and moral theory, and as a matter of theory the formulation of definite moral rules is substantially independent of religion and is an assertion of its independence. Indeed, the conflict between a growing moral sense and religion is almost as large a fact in the social sphere as the conflict between religion and science is in the intellectual one.

In all its earlier stages religion is at best non-moral. It becomes otherwise later only because of the reaction of a socialized morality on religious beliefs. Early religion is never concerned with the morality of its teaching, nor are the worshippers concerned with the morality of their gods. The sole question is what the gods desire and how best to satisfy them. We cannot even conceive man ascribing ethical qualities to his gods until he has first of all conceived them in regard to his fellow men. The savage has no *moral* reverence for his gods; they are magnified men, but not perfect ones. He worships not because he admires, but because he fears. Fear is, indeed, one of the root causes of religious belief. Professor Leuba quite admits the origin of religion is fear, but he reserves the possibility of man being occasionally placed under such favourable conditions that fear may be absent. We admit the possibility, but at present it remains a possibility only. At present all the evidence goes to prove the words of Ribot that, "'The religious sentiment is composed first of all of the emotion of fear in its different degrees, from profound terror to vague uneasiness, due to faith in an unknown mysterious and impalpable power." And if that be admitted, we can scarcely find here the origin of morality.

What is here overlooked is the important fact that while religion, as such, commences in a reasoned process, morality is firmly established before mankind is even aware of its existence. A formulated religion is essentially of the nature of a theory set forth to explain or to deal with certain experiences. Morality, on the other hand, takes its rise in those feelings and instincts that are developed in animal and human societies under the pressure of natural selection. The affection of the animal for its young, of the human mother for its child, the attraction of male and female, the sympathetic feelings that bind members of the same species together, these do not depend upon theory, or even upon an intellectual perception of their value. Theory tries to account for their existence, and reason justifies their being, but they are fundamentally the product of associated life. And it is precisely because morality is the inevitable condition of associated life that it has upon religion the effect of modifying it until it is at least not too great an outrage upon the conditions of social well-being. All along we can, if we will, see how the developing moral sense forces a change in religious teaching. At one time there is nothing revolting in the Christian doctrine of election which dooms one to heaven and another to hell without the slightest regard to personal merit. At another the doctrine of eternal damnation is rejected as a matter of course. Heresy hunting and heretic burning, practised as a matter of course by one generation become highly repulsive to another. In every direction we see religious beliefs undergoing a modification under the influence of moral and social growth. It is always man who moralizes his gods; never by any chance is it the gods who moralize man.

If we are to arrive at a proper understanding of religion we can, therefore, no more assume morals to

be an integral part of religion than we can assume medicine or any of the special arts, all of which may be associated with religion. It will not even do to define religion with Mr. W. H. Mallock [3] as a belief that the world "has been made and is sustained by an intelligence external to and essentially independent of it." That may pass as a definition of Theism, but Theism is only one of the phases of religion, and the idea of a creator independent of the universe is one that is quite alien to the earlier stages of religion. And to deny the name of religion to primitive beliefs is to put oneself on the level of the type of Christian who declines to call any superstition but his own religion. It is for this reason impossible to agree with Professor Leuba when he says that "the idea of a creator must take precedence of ghosts and nature beings in the making of a religion." If by precedence the order of importance, from the standpoint of later and comparatively modern forms of religion, is intended, the statement may pass. But if the precedence claimed is a time order, the reply is that, instead of the idea of a creator taking precedence of ghosts and nature beings, it is from these that the idea of a creator is evolved. It is quite true Professor Leuba holds that "belief in the existence of unseen anthropopathic beings is not religion. It is only when man enters into relation with them that religion comes into existence," but so soon as man believes in the existence of them he believes himself to be in relation with them, and a large part of his efforts is expended in making these relations of an amicable and profitable character.

A further definition of religion, first given, I think, by the late Professor Fiske, but since widely used, as a craving for "fulness of life," must be dismissed as

[3] *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 11.

equally faulty. For if by fulness of life is meant the desire to make it morally and intellectually richer, the answer is that this desire is plainly the product of a progressive social life, of which much that now passes for religion is the adulterated expression. Apologetically, it is an attempt so to state religion that it may evade criticism of its essential character. From one point of view this may be gratifying enough, but it is no help to an understanding of the nature of religion. And how little religion does help to a fuller life will be seen by anyone who knows the part played by organized religion in mental development and how blindly obstructive it is to new ideas in all departments of life. All these attempts to define religion in terms of ethics, of metaphysics, or as the craving after an ideal are wholly misleading. It is reading history backwards, and attributing to primitive human nature feelings and conceptions which it does not and cannot possess.

In another work [4] I have traced the origin of the belief in God to the mental state of primitive mankind, and there is no need to go over the same ground here at any length. Commencing with the indisputable fact that religion is something that is acquired, an examination of the state of mind in which primitive mankind faced, and still faces, the world, led to the conclusion that the idea of god begins in the personification of natural forces by the savage. The growth of the idea of God was there traced back to the ghost, not to the exclusion of other methods of god making, but certainly as one of its prominent causes. I must refer readers to that work who desire a more extended treatment of the god-idea.

[4] *Theism or Atheism,* Chapter 2.

What remains to be traced here, in order to understand the other factor that is common to religions, is the belief in a continued state of existence after death, or at least of a soul.

It has been shown to the point of demonstration by writers such as Spencer, Tylor, and Frazer, that the idea of a double is suggested to man by his experience of dreams, swoons, and allied normal and abnormal experiences. Even in the absence of evidence coming to us from the beliefs of existing tribes of savages, the fact that the ghost is always depicted as identical in appearance with the living person would be enough to suggest its dream origin. But there are other considerations that carry the proof further. The savage sees in his dreams the figures of dead men and assumes that there is a double that can get out of the body during sleep. But he also dreams of dead men, and this is also proof that the dead man still exists. Death does not, then, involve the death of the ghost, but only its removal to some other sphere of existence. Further, the likeness of sleep itself to death is so obvious and so striking that it has formed one of the most insistent features of human thought and speech. With primitive man it is far more than a figure of speech. The Melanesians put this point of view when they say, "the soul goes out of the body in some dreams, and if for some reason it does not come back the man is found dead in the morning." Death and dreaming have, therefore, this in common, they are both due to the withdrawal of the double. Hence we find a whole series of ceremonies designed to avert death or to facilitate the return of the double. The lingering of this practice is well illustrated by Sir Frederick Treves in his book, *The Other Side of the Lantern*. He there tells how he saw a Chinese mother, with the tears streaming down her face, waving at the door of the

house the clothing of a recently deceased child in order to bring back the departed spirit.

Death is thus the separation of the double from the body; but if it may return, its return is not always a matter of rejoicing, for we find customs that are plainly intended to prevent the ghost recognizing the living or to find its way back to its old haunts. Thus Frazer has shown that the wearing of black is really a form of disguise. It is a method taken to disguise the living from the attentions of the dead. It is in order to avoid recognition by spirits who wish to injure them that the Tongans change their war costume at every battle. The Chinese call their best beloved children by worthless names in order to delude evil spirits. In Egypt, too, the children who were most thought of were the worst clad. In some places the corpse is never carried out through the door, but by a hole in the side of the hut, which is afterwards closed so that the ghost may not find its way back.

The ghost being conceived as at all points identical with living beings, it demands attention after death. It needs food, weapons, servants, wives. In this way there originates a whole group of burial customs, performed partly from fear of what the ghost may do if its wants are neglected. The custom of burying food and weapons with the dead thus receives a simple explanation. These things are buried with the dead man in order that their spirit may accompany his to the next world and serve the same uses there that they did here. The modern custom of scattering flowers over a grave is unquestionably a survival of this primitive belief. The killing of a wife on the husband's grave has the same origin. Her spirit goes to attend the husband in the ghost-land. In the case of a chief we have the killing of servants for the same reason. When Leonidas says, " Bury me on my shield, I will enter even

Hades as a Lacedæmonian," he was exhibiting the persistence of this belief in classical times. The Chinese offer a further example by making little paper houses, filling them with paper models of the things used by the dead person, and burning them on the grave. All over the world we have the same class of customs developing from the same beliefs, and the same beliefs projected by the human mind when brought face to face with the same class of phenomena.

As the ghost is pictured as like the physical man, so the next world is more or less a replica of this. The chief distinction is that there is a greater abundance of desirable things. Hunting tribes have elysiums where there is an abundance of game. The old Norse heaven was a place where there was unlimited fighting. The gold and diamonds and rubies of the Christian heaven represent a stage of civilization where these things had acquired a special value. Social distinctions, too, are often maintained. The Caribs believe that every time they secure an enemy's head they have gained a servant in the next world. And all know the story of the French aristocrat who, when threatened with hell, replied, "God will think twice before damning a person of my quality."

Several other consequences of this service paid to the dead may be noted. The ghost being drawn to the place where the body is buried, the desire to preserve the corpse probably led to the practice of embalming. The grave becomes a place of sanctity, of pilgrimage, and of religious observance, and it has been maintained by many writers, notably by Mr. W. Simpson in his *Worship of Death*, that the service round the grave gives us the beginning of all temple worship.

But from this brief view of the beginnings of religion we are able to see how completely fallacious are all those efforts to derive religion from an attempt to

achieve an ideal, from a desire to solve certain philosophical problems, or from any of the other sources that are paraded by modern apologists. The origin and nature of religion is comparatively simple to understand, once we have cleared our minds of all these fallacies and carefully examine the facts. Religion is no more than the explanation which the primitive mind gives of the experiences which it has of the world. And, therefore, the only definition that covers all the facts, and which stresses the essence of all religions, high and low, savage and civilized, is that given by Tylor, namely, the belief in supernatural beings. It is the one definition that expresses the feature common to all religions, and with that definition before us we are able to use language with a precision that is impossible so long as we attempt to read into religion something that is absent from all its earlier forms, and which is only introduced when advanced thought makes the belief in the supernatural more and more difficult to retain its hold over the human mind.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UTILITY OF RELIGION.

The real nature of religion being as stated, it having originated in an utterly erroneous view of things, it would seem that nothing more can be needed to justify its rejection. But the conclusion would not be correct, at least so far as the mass of believers or quasi-believers are concerned. Here the conviction still obtains that religion, no matter what its origin, still wields an enormous influence for good. The curious thing is that when one enquires "what religion is it that has exerted this beneficent influence?" the replies effectually cancel one another. Each means by religion his own religion, and each accuses the religion of the other man of all the faults with which the Freethinker accuses the whole. The avowed object of our widespread missionary activity is to save the "heathen" from the evil effects of their religion; and there is not the least doubt that if the heathen had the brute force at their command, and the impudence that we have, they would cordially reciprocate. And the efforts of the various Christian sects to convert each other is too well known to need mention. So that the only logical inference from all this is that, while all religions are, when taken singly, injurious, taken in the bulk they are sources of profound benefit.

It is not alone the common or garden order of religionist who takes up this curious position, nor is it even the better educated believer; it is not uncommon to find those who have rejected all the formal religions

of the world yet seeking to discover some good that religion has done or is doing. As an illustration of this we may cite an example from Sir James Frazer, than whom no one has done more to bring home to students a knowledge of the real nature of religious beliefs. It is the more surprising to find him putting in a plea for the good done by religion, not in the present, but in the past. And such an instance, if it does nothing else, may at least serve to mitigate our ferocity towards the common type of religionist.

In an address delivered in 1909, entitled " Psyche's Task: A discourse concerning the influence of superstition on the growth of Institutions," he puts in a plea for the consideration of superstition (religion) at various stages of culture. Of its effects generally, he says: —

> That it has done much harm in the world cannot be denied. It has sacrificed countless lives, wasted untold treasures, embroiled nations, severed friends, parted husbands and wives, parents and children, putting swords and worse than swords between them; it has filled gaols and madhouses with its deluded victims; it has broken many hearts, embittered the whole of many a life, and not content with persecuting the living it has pursued the dead into the grave and beyond it, gloating over the horrors which its foul imagination has conjured up to appal and torture the survivors. It has done all this and more.

Now this is a severe indictment, and one is a little surprised to find following that a plea on behalf of this same superstition to the effect that it has " among certain races and at certain times strengthened the respect for government, property, marriage, and human life." In support of this proposition he cites a large number of instances from various races of people,

all of which prove, not what Sir James sets out to prove, but only that religious observances and beliefs have been connected with certain institutions that are in themselves admirable enough. And on this point there is not, nor can there be, any serious dispute. One can find many similar instances among ourselves to-day. But the real question at issue is a deeper one than that. It is not enough for the religionist to show that religion has often been associated with good things and has given them its sanction. The reply to this would be that if it had been otherwise religion would long since have disappeared. The essential question here is, Have the institutions named a basis in secular and social life, and would they have developed in the absence of superstition as they have developed with superstition in the field?

Now I do not see that Sir James Frazer proves either that these institutions have not a sufficient basis in secular life—he would, I imagine, admit that they have; or that they would not have developed as well in the absence of superstition as they have done with it. In fact, the whole plea that good has been done by superstition seems to be destroyed in the statements that although certain institutions "have been based partly on superstitions, it by no means follows that even among these races they have never been based on anything else," and that whenever institutions have proved themselves stable and permanent "there is a strong presumption that they rest on something more solid than superstition." So that, after all, it may well be that superstition is all the time taking credit for the working of forces that are not of its kind or nature.

Let us take the example given of the respect for human life as a crucial test. Admitting that religions have taught that to take life was a sinful act, one might well interpose with the query as to whether it

was ever necessary to teach man that homicide within certain limits was a wrong thing. Pre-evolutionary sociology, which sometimes taught that man originally led an existence in which his hand was against every other man, and who, therefore, fought the battle of life strictly off his own bat, may have favoured that assumption. But that we now know is quite wrong. We know that man slowly emerged from a pre-human gregarious stage, and that in all group life there is an organic restraint on mutual slaughter. The essential condition of group life is that the nature of the individual shall be normally devoid of the desire for the indiscriminate slaughter of his fellows. And if that is true of animals, it is certainly true of man. Primitive human society does not and cannot represent a group of beings each of whom must be restrained by direct coercion from murdering the other.

In this case, therefore, we have to reckon with both biological and sociological forces, and I do not see that it needs more than this to explain all there is to explain. Human life is always associated life, and this means not alone a basis of mutual forbearance and co-operation, but a development of the sympathetic feelings which tends to increase as society develops, they being, as a matter of fact, the conditions of its growth. And whatever competition existed between tribes would still further emphasize the value of those feelings that led to effective co-operation.

The question, then, whether the anti-homicidal feeling is at all dependent upon religion is answered in the negative by the fact that it ante-dates what we may term the era of conscious social organization. That of whether religion strengthens this feeling still remains, although even that has been answered by implication. And the first thing to be noted here is that whatever may be the value of the superstitious

safeguard against homicide it certainly has no value as against people outside the tribe. In fact, when a savage desires to kill an enemy he finds in superstition a fancied source of strength, and often of encouragement. Westermarck points out that "savages carefully distinguish between an act of homicide committed in their own community and one where the victim is a stranger. Whilst the former is under ordinary circumstances disapproved of, the latter is in most cases allowed and often regarded as praiseworthy." And Frazer himself points out that the belief in immortality plays no small part in encouraging war among primitive peoples,[1] while if we add the facts of the killing of children, of old men and women, and wives, together with the practice of human sacrifice, we shall see little cause to attribute the development of the feeling against homicide to religious beliefs.

In one passage in his address Sir James does show himself quite alive to the evil influence of the belief in immortality. He says:—

> It might with some show of reason be maintained that no belief has done so much to retard the economic and thereby the social progress of mankind as the belief in the immortality of the soul; for this belief has led race after race, generation after generation, to sacrifice the real wants of the living to the imaginary wants of the dead. The waste and destruc-

[1] The state of war which normally exists between many, if not most, neighbouring savage tribes, springs in large measure directly from their belief in immortality; since one of the commonest motives to hostility is a desire to appease the angry ghosts of friends who are supposed to have perished by baleful arts of sorcerers in another tribe, and who, if vengeance is not inflicted on their real or imaginary murderers, will wreak their fury on their undutiful fellow-tribesmen.—*The Belief in Immortality*, Vol. I., p. 468.

> tion of life and property which this faith has entailed has been enormous and incalculable. But I am not here concerned with the disastrous and deplorable consequences, the unspeakable follies and crimes and miseries which have flowed in practice from the theory of a future life. My business at present is with the more cheerful side of a gloomy subject.

Every author has, of course, the fullest right to select whichever aspect of a subject he thinks deserves treatment, but all the same one may point out that it is this dwelling on the " cheerful side " of these beliefs that encourages the religionist to put forward claims on behalf of present day religion that Sir James himself would be the first to challenge. There is surely greater need to emphasize the darker side of a creed that has thousands of paid advocates presenting an imaginary bright side to the public gaze.

But what has been said of the relation of the feeling against homicide applies with no more than a variation of terms to the other instances given by Sir James Frazer. Either these institutions have a basis in utility or they have not. If they have not, then religion can claim no social credit for their preservation. If they have a basis in utility, then the reason for their preservation is to be found in social selection, although the precise local form in which an institution appears may be determined by other circumstances. And when Sir James says that the task of government has been facilitated by the superstition that the governors belonged to a superior class of beings, one may safely assume that the statement holds good only of individual governors, or of particular forms of government. It may well be that when a people are led to believe that a certain individual possesses supernatural powers, or that a particular government enjoys the favour of supernatural beings, there will be less inclination to

resentment against orders than there would be otherwise. But government and governors, in other words, a general body of rules for the government of the tribe, and the admitted leadership of certain favoured individuals, would remain natural facts in the absence of superstition, and their development or suppression would remain subject to the operation of social or natural selection. So, again, with the desire for private property. The desire to retain certain things as belonging to oneself is not altogether unnoticeable among animals. A dog will fight for its bone, monkeys secrete things which they desire to retain for their own use, etc., and so far as the custom possesses advantages, we may certainly credit savages with enough common-sense to be aware of the fact. But the curious thing is that the institution of private property is not nearly so powerful among primitive peoples as it is among those more advanced. So that we are faced with this curious comment upon Sir James's thesis. Granting that the institution of private property has been strengthened by superstition we have the strange circumstance that that institution is weakest where superstition is strongest and strongest where superstition is weakest.

The truth is that Sir James Frazer seems here to have fallen into the same error as the late Walter Bagehot, and to have formed the belief that primitive man required breaking in to the "social yoke." The truth is that the great need of primitive mankind is not to be broken in but to acquire the courage and determination to break out. This error may have originated in the disinclination of the savage to obey *our* rules, or it may have been a heritage from the eighteenth century philosophy of the existence of an idyllic primitive social state. The truth is, however, that there is no one so fettered by custom as is the savage.

The restrictions set by a savage society on its members would be positively intolerable to civilized beings. And if it be said that these customs required formation, the reply is that inheriting the imitability of the pre-human gregarious animal, this would form the basis on which the tyrannizing custom of primitive life is built.

There was, however, another generalization of Bagehot's that was unquestionably sound. Assuming that the first step necessary to primitive mankind was to frame a custom as the means of his being "broken in," the next step in progress was to break it, and that was a far more difficult matter. Progress was impossible until this was done, and how difficult it is to get this step taken observation of the people living in civilized countries will show. But it is in relation to this second and all important step that one can clearly trace the influence of religion. And its influence is completely the reverse of being helpful. For of all the hindrances to a change of custom there is none that act with such force as does religion. This is the case with those customs with which vested interest has no direct connection, but it operates with tenfold force where this exists. Once a custom is established in a primitive community the conditions of social life surround it with religious beliefs, and thereafter to break it means a breach in the wall of religious observances with which the savage is surrounded. And so soon as we reach the stage of the establishment of a regular priesthood, we have to reckon with the operation of a vested interest that has always been keenly alive to anything which affected its profit or prestige.

It would not be right to dismiss the discussion of a subject connected with so well-respected a name as that of Sir James Frazer and leave the reader with the impression that he is putting in a plea for current

religion. He is not. He hints pretty plainly that his argument that religion has been of some use to the race applies to savage times only. We see this in such sentences as the following: "More and more, as time goes on, morality shifts its grounds from the sands of superstition to the rock of reason, from the imaginary to the real, from the supernatural to the natural..... The State has found a better reason than these old wives' fables for guarding with the flaming sword of justice the approach to the tree of life," and also in saying that, "If it can be proved that in certain races and at certain times the institutions in question have been based partly on superstition, it by no means follows that even among these races they have never been based on anything else. On the contrary.....there is a strong presumption that they rest mainly on something much more solid than superstition." In modern times no such argument as the one I have been discussing has the least claim to logical force. But that, as we all know, does not prevent its being used by full-blown religionists, and by those whose minds are only partly liberated from a great historic superstition.

It will be observed that the plea of Frazer's we have been examining argues that the function of religion in social life is of a conservative character. And so far he is correct, he is only wrong in assuming it to have been of a beneficial nature. The main function of religion in sociology is conservative, not the wise conservatism which supports an institution or a custom because of its approved value, but of the kind that sees in an established custom a reason for its continuance. Urged, in the first instance, by the belief that innumerable spirits are forever on the watch, punishing the slightest infraction of their wishes, opposition to reform or to new ideas receives definite shape and increased strength by the rise of a priest-

hood. Henceforth economic interest goes hand in hand with superstitious fears. Whichever way man turns he finds artificial obstacles erected. Every deviation from the prescribed path is threatened with penalties in this world and the next. The history of every race and of every science tells the same story, and the amount of time and energy that mankind has spent in fighting these ghosts of its own savage past is the measure of the degree to which religion has kept the race in a state of relative barbarism.

This function of unreasoning conservatism is not, it must be remembered, accidental. It belongs to the very nature of religion. Dependent upon the maintenance of certain primitive conceptions of the world and of man, religion dare not encourage new ideas lest it sap its own foundations. Spencer has reminded us that religion is, under the conditions of its origin, perfectly rational. That is quite true.[2] Religion meets science, when the stage of conflict arises, as an opposing interpretation of certain classes of facts. The one interpretation can only grow at the expense of the

[2] It may with equal truth be said that all beliefs are with a similar qualification quite rational. The attempt to divide people into "Rationalists" and "Irrationalists" is quite fallacious and is philosophically absurd. Reason is used in the formation of religious as in the formation of non-religious beliefs. The distinction between the man who is religious and one who is not, or, if it be preferred, one who is superstitious and one who is not, is not that the one reasons and the other does not. Both reason. Indeed, the reasoning of the superstitionist is often of the most elaborate kind. The distinction is that of one having false premises, or drawing unwarrantable conclusions from sound premises. The only ultimate distinctions are those of religionist and non-religionist, supernaturalist and non-supernaturalist, Theist or Atheist. All else are mere matters of compromise, exhibitions of timidity, or illustrations of that confused thinking which itself gives rise to religion in all its forms.

other. While religion is committed to the explanation of the world in terms of vital force, science is committed to that of non-conscious mechanism. Opposition is thus present at the outset, and it must continue to the end. The old cannot be maintained without anathematizing the new; the new cannot be established without displacing the old. The conflict is inevitable; the antagonism is irreconcilable.

It lies, therefore, in the very nature of the case that religion, as religion, can give no real help to man in the understanding of himself and the world. Whatever good religion may appear to do is properly to be attributed to the non-religious forces with which it is associated. But religion, being properly concerned with the relations between man and mythical supernatural beings, can exert no real influence for good on human affairs. Far from that being the case, it can easily be shown to have had quite an opposite effect. There is not merely the waste of energy in the direction above indicated, but in many other ways. If we confine ourselves to Christianity some conception of the nature of its influence may be formed if we think what the state of the world might have been to-day had the work of enlightenment continued from the point it had reached under the old Greek and Roman civilizations. Bacon and Galileo in their prisons, Bruno and Vanini at the stake are illustrations of the disservice that Christianity has done the cause of civilization, and the obstruction it has offered to human well-being.

Again, consider the incubus placed on human progress by the institution of a priesthood devoted to the service of supernatural beings. In the fullest and truest sense of the word a priesthood represents a parasitic growth on the social body. I am not referring to individual members of the priesthood in their capacity as private citizens, but as priests, as agents or repre-

sentatives of the supernatural. And here the truth is that of all the inventions and discoveries that have helped to build up civilization not one of them is owing to the priesthood, as such. One may confidently say that if all the energies of all the priests in the whole world were concentrated on a single community, and all their prayers, formulæ, and doctrines devoted to the one end, the well-being of that community would not be advanced thereby a single iota.

Far and away, the priesthood is the greatest parasitic class the world has known. All over the world, in both savage and civilized times, we see the priesthoods of the world enthroned, we see them enjoying a subsistence wrung from toil through credulity, and from wealth through self-interest. From the savage medicine hut up to the modern cathedral we see the earth covered with useless edifices devoted to the foolish service of imaginary deities. We see the priesthood endowed with special privileges, their buildings relieved from the taxes which all citizens are compelled to pay, and even special taxes levied upon the public for their maintenance. The gods may no longer demand the sacrifice of the first born, but they still demand the sacrifice of time, energy, and money that might well be applied elsewhere. And the people in every country, out of their stupidity, continue to maintain a large body of men who, by their whole training and interest, are compelled to act as the enemies of liberty and progress.

It is useless arguing that the evils that follow religion are not produced by it, that they are casual, and will disappear with a truer understanding of what religion is. It is not true, and the man who argues in that way shows that he does not yet understand what religion is. The evils that follow religion are deeply imbedded in the nature of religion itself. All religion takes its rise

in error, and vested error threatened with destruction instinctively resorts to force, fraud, and imposture, in self defence. The universality of the evils that accompany religion would alone prove that there is more than a mere accident in the association. The whole history of religion is, on the purely intellectual side, the history of a delusion. Happily this delusion is losing its hold on the human mind. Year by year its intellectual and moral worthlessness is being more generally recognized. Religion explains nothing, and it does nothing that is useful. Yet in its name millions of pounds are annually squandered and many thousands of men withdrawn from useful labour, and saddled on the rest of the community for maintenance. But here, again, economic and intellectual forces are combining for the liberation of the race from its historic incubus. Complete emancipation will not come in a day, but it will come, and its arrival will mark the close of the greatest revolution that has taken place in the history of the race.

CHAPTER VIII.

FREETHOUGHT AND GOD.

WHY do people believe in God? If one turns to the pleas of professional theologians there is no lack of answers to the question. These answers are both numerous and elaborate, and if quantity and repetition were enough, the Freethinker would find himself hopelessly "snowed under." But on examination all these replies suffer from one defect. They should ante-date the belief, whereas they post-date it. They cannot be the cause of belief for the reason that the belief was here long before the arguments came into existence. Neither singly nor collectively do these so-called reasons correspond to the causes that have ever led a single person, at any time or at any place, to believe in a God. If they already believed, the arguments were enough to provide them with sufficient justification to go on believing. If they did not already believe, the arguments were powerless. And never, by any chance, do they describe the causes that led to the existence of the belief in God, either historically or individually. They are, in truth, no more than excuses for continuing to believe. They are never the causes of belief.

The evidence for the truth of this is at hand in the person of all who believe. Let one consider, on the one hand, the various arguments for the existence of God—the argument from causation, from design, from necessary existence, etc., then put on the other side the age at which men and women began to believe in deity, and their grasp of arguments of the kind mentioned.

There is clearly no relation between the two. Leaving on one side the question of culture, it is at once apparent that long before the individual is old enough to appreciate in the slightest degree the nature of the arguments advanced he is already a believer. And if he is not a believer in his early years, he is never one when he reaches maturity, certainly not in a civilized society. And when we turn from the individual Goddite to Goddites in the mass, the assumption that they owe their belief to to the philosophical arguments advanced becomes grotesque in its absurdity. To assume that the average Theist, whose philosophy is taken from the daily newspaper and the weekly sermon, derives his conviction from a series of abstruse philosophical arguments is simply ridiculous. Those who are honest to themselves will admit that they were taught the belief long before they were old enough to bring any real criticism to bear upon it. It was the product of their early education, impressed upon them by their parents, and all the "reasons" that are afterwards alleged in justification are only pleas why they should not be disturbed in their belief.

Are we in any better position if we turn from the individual to the race? Is the belief in God similar to, say, the belief in gravitation, which, discovered by a genius, and resting upon considerations which the ordinary person finds too abstruse to thoroughly understand, becomes a part of our education, and is accepted upon well established authority? Again, the facts are dead against such an assumption. It is with the race as with the individual. Science and philosophy do not precede the belief in God and provide the foundation for it, they succeed it and lead to its modification and rejection. We are, in this respect, upon very solid ground. In some form or another the belief in God, or gods, belongs to very early states of human

society. Savages have it long before they have the slightest inkling of what we moderns would call a scientific conception of the world. And to assume that the savage, as we know him, began to believe in his gods because of a number of scientific reasons, such as the belief in universal causation, or any of the other profound speculations with which the modern theologian beclouds the issue, is as absurd as to attribute the belief of the Salvation Army preacher to philosophical speculations. Added to which we may note that the savage is a severely practical person. He is not at all interested in metaphysics, and his contributions to the discussions of a philosophical society would be of a very meagre character. His problem is to deal with the concrete difficulties of his everyday life, and when he is able to do this he is content.

But, on the other hand, we know that our own belief in God is descended from his belief. We know that we can trace it back without a break through generations of social culture, until we reach the savage stage of social existence. It is he who, so to speak, discovers God, he establishes it as a part of the social institutions that govern the lives of every member of the group; we find it in our immaturity established as one of those many thought-forms which determine so powerfully our intellectual development. The belief in God meets each newcomer into the social arena. It is impressed upon each in a thousand and one different ways, and it is only when the belief is challenged by an opposing system of thought that philosophical theories are elaborated in its defence.

The possibility of deriving the idea of God from scientific and philosophic thought being ruled out, what remains? The enquiry from being philosophical becomes historical. That is, instead of discussing whether there are sufficient reasons for justifying the

belief in God, we are left with the question of determining the causes that led people to ever regard the belief as being solidly based upon fact. It is a question of history, or rather, one may say, of anthropology of the mental history of man. When we read of some poor old woman who has been persecuted for bewitching someone's cattle or children we no longer settle down to discuss whether witchcraft rests upon fact or not; we know it does not, and our sole concern is to discover the conditions, mental and social, which enabled so strange a belief to flourish. The examination of evidence—the legal aspect—thus gives place to the historical, and the historical finally resolves itself into the psychological. For what we are really concerned with in an examination of the idea of God is the discovery and reconstruction of those states of mind which gave the belief birth. And that search is far easier and the results far more conclusive than many imagine.

In outlining this evidence it will only be necessary to present its general features. This for two reasons. First, because a multiplicity of detail is apt to hide from the general reader many of the essential features of the truth; secondly, the fact of a difference of opinion concerning the time order of certain stages in the history of the god-idea is likely to obscure the fact of the unanimity which exists among all those qualified to express an authoritative opinion as to the nature of the conditions that have given the idea birth. The various theories of the sequence of the different phases of the religious idea should no more blind us to the fact that there exists a substantial agreement that the belief in gods has its roots in the fear and ignorance of uncivilized mankind, than the circumstance that there is going on among biologists a discussion as to the machinery of evolution should overshadow the fact

that evolution itself is a demonstrated truth which no competent observer questions.

In an earlier chapter we have already indicated the essential conditions which lead to the origin of religious beliefs, and there is no need again to go over that ground. What is necessary at present is to sketch as briefly as is consistent with lucidity those frames of mind to which the belief in God owes its existence.

To realize this no very recondite instrument of research is required. We need nothing more elaborate than the method by which we are hourly in the habit of estimating each other's thoughts, and of gauging one another's motives. When I see a man laugh I assume that he is pleased; when he frowns I assume that he is angry. There is here only an application of the generally accepted maxim that when we see identical results we are warranted in assuming identical causes. In this way we can either argue from causes to effects or from effects to causes. A further statement of the same principle is that when we are dealing with biological facts we may assume that identical structures imply identical functions. The structure of a dead animal will tell us what its functions were when living as certainly as though we had the living animal in front of us. We may relate function to structure or structure to function. And in this we are using nothing more uncommon than the accepted principle of universal causation.

Now, in all thinking there are two factors. There is the animal or human brain, the organ of thought, and there is the material for thought as represented by the existing knowledge of the world. If we had an exact knowledge of the kind of brain that functioned, and the exact quantity and quality of the knowledge existing, the question as to the ideas which would result would be little more than a problem in mathematics. We

could make the calculation with the same assurance that an astronomer can estimate the position of a planet a century hence. In the case of primitive mankind we do not possess anything like the exact knowledge one would wish, but we do know enough to say in rather more than a general way the kind of thinking of which our earliest ancestors were capable, and what were its products. We can get at the machinery of the primitive brain, and can estimate its actions, and that without going further than we do when we assume that primitive man was hungry and thirsty, was pleased and angry, loved and feared. And, indeed, it was because he experienced fear and pleasure and love and hate that the gods came into existence.

Of the factors which determine the kind of thinking one does, we know enough to say that there were two things certain of early mankind. We know the kind of thinking of which he was capable, and we have a general notion of the material existing for thinking. Speaking of one of these early ancestors of ours, Professor Arthur Keith says, "Piltdown man saw, heard, felt, thought and dreamt much as we do," that is, there was the same *kind* of brain at work that is at work now. And that much we could be sure of by going no farther back than the savages of to-day. But as size of brain is not everything, we are warranted in saying that the brain was of a relatively simple type, while the knowledge of the world which existed, and which gives us the material for thinking, was of a very imperfect and elementary character. There was great ignorance, and there was great fear. From these two conditions, ignorance and fear, sprang the gods. Of that there is no doubt whatever. There is scarcely a work which deals with the life of primitive peoples to-day that does not emphasize that fact. Consciously or unconsciously it cannot avoid doing so. Long ago

a Latin writer hit on this truth in the well-known saying, "Fear made the gods," and Aristotle expressed the same thing in a more comprehensive form by saying that fear first set man philosophizing. The undeveloped mind troubles little about things so long as they are going smoothly and comfortably. It is when something painful happens that concern is awakened. And all the gods of primitive life bear this primal stamp of fear. That is why religion, with its persistent harking back to the primitive, with its response to the "Call of the Wild" still dwells upon the fear of the Lord as a means of arousing a due sense of piety. The gods fatten on fear as a usurer does upon the folly of his clients, and in both cases the interest demanded far outweighs the value of the services rendered. At a later stage man faces his gods in a different spirit; he loses his fear and examines them; and gods that are not feared are but poor things. They exist mainly as indisputable records of their own deterioration.

Now to primitive man, struggling along in a world of which he was so completely ignorant, the one certain thing was that the world was alive. The wind that roared, the thunder that growled, the disease that left him so mysteriously stricken, were all so many living things. The division of these living forces into good and bad followed naturally from this first conception of their nature. And whatever be the stages of that process the main lines admit of no question, nor is there any question as to the nature of the conditions that brought the gods into existence. On any scientific theory of religion the gods represent no more than the personified ignorance and fear of primitive humanity. However much anthropologists may differ as to whether the god always originates from the ghost or not, whether animism is first and the worship of the

ghost secondary or not, there is agreement on that point. Whichever theory we care to embrace, the broad fact is generally admitted that the gods are the products of ignorance and fear. Man fears the gods as children and even animals fear the unknown and the dangerous.

And as the gods are born of conditions such as those outlined, as man reads his own feelings and passions and desires into nature, so we find that the early gods are frankly, obtrusively, man-like. The gods are copies of their worshippers, faithful reflections of those who fear them. This, indeed, remains true to the end. When the stage is reached that the idea of God as a physical counterpart of man becomes repulsive, it is still unable to shake off this anthropomorphic element. To the modern worshipper God must not possess a body, but he must have love, and intelligence—as though the mental qualities of man are less human than the bodily ones! They are as human as arms or legs. And every reason that will justify the rejection of the conception of the universe being ruled over by a being who is like man in his physical aspects is equally conclusive against believing the universe to be ruled over by a being who resembles man in his mental characteristics. The one belief is a survival of the other; and the one would not now be accepted had not the other been believed in beforehand.

I have deliberately refrained from discussing the various arguments put forward to justify the belief in God in order that attention should not be diverted from the main point, which is that the belief in deity owes its existence to the ignorant interpretation of natural happenings by early or uncivilized mankind. Everything here turns logically on the question of origin. If the belief in God began in the way I have outlined, the question of veracity may be dismissed. The

question is one of origin only. It is not a question of man first seeing a thing but dimly and then getting a clearer vision as his knowledge becomes more thorough. It is a question of a radical misunderstanding of certain experiences, the vogue of an altogether wrong interpretation, and its displacement by an interpretation of a quite different nature. The god of the savage was in the nature of an inference drawn from the world of the savage. There was the admitted premiss and there was the obvious conclusion. But with us the premiss no longer exists. We deliberately reject it as being altogether unwarrantable. And we cannot reject the premiss while retaining the conclusion. Logically, the god of the savage goes with the world of the savage; it should have no place in the mind of the really civilized human being.

It is for this reason that I am leaving on one side all those semi-metaphysical and pseudo-philosophical arguments that are put forward to justify the belief in God. As I have already said, they are merely excuses for continuing a belief that has no real warranty in fact. No living man or woman believes in God because of any such argument. We have the belief in God with us to-day for the same reason that we have in our bodies a number of rudimentary structures. As the one is reminiscent of an earlier stage of existence so is the other. To use the expressive phrase of Winwood Reade's, we have tailed minds as well as tailed bodies. The belief in God meets each newcomer to the social sphere. It is forced upon them before they are old enough to offer effective resistance in the shape of acquired knowledge that would render its lodgement in the mind impossible. Afterwards, the dice of social power and prestige are loaded in its favour, while the mental inertia of some, and the self-interest of others, give force to the arguments which I have

called mere mental subterfuges for perpetuating the belief in God.

Only one other remark need be made. In the beginning the gods exist as the apotheosis of ignorance. The reason the savage had for believing in God was that he did not know the real causes of the phenomena around him. And that remains the reason why people believe in deity to-day. Under whatever guise the belief is presented, analysis brings it ultimately to that. The whole history of the human mind, in relation to the idea of God, shows that so soon as man discovers the natural causes of any phenomenon or group of phenomena the idea of God dies out in connection therewith. God is only conceived as a cause or as an explanation so long as no other cause or explanation is forthcoming. In common speech and in ordinary thought we only bring in the name of God where uncertainty exists, never where knowledge is obtainable. We pray to God to cure a fever, but never to put on again a severed limb. We associate God with the production of a good harvest, but not with a better coal output. We use "God only knows" as the equivalent of our own ignorance, and call on God for help only where our own helplessness is manifest. The idea remains true to itself throughout. Born in ignorance and cradled in fear, it makes its appeal to the same elements to the end. And if it apes the language of philosophy, it does so only as do those who purchase a ready-made pedigree in order to hide the obscurity of their origin.

CHAPTER IX.

FREETHOUGHT AND DEATH.

In the early months of the European war a mortally wounded British soldier was picked up between the lines, after lying there unattended for two days. He died soon after he was brought in, and one of his last requests was that a copy of Ruskin's *Crown of Wild Olive* should be buried with him. He said the book had been with him all the time he had been in France, it had given him great comfort, and he wished it to be buried with him. Needless to say, his wish was carried out, and " somewhere in France " there lies a soldier with a copy of the *Crown of Wild Olive* clasped to his breast.

There is another story, of a commoner character, which, although different in form, is wholly similar in substance. This tells of the soldier who in his last moments asks to see a priest, accepts his ministrations with thankfulness, and dies comforted with the repetition of familiar formulæ and customary prayers. In the one case a Bible and a priest; in the other a volume of lectures by one of the masters of English prose. The difference is, at first, striking, but there is an underlying agreement, and they may be used together to illustrate a single psychological principle.

Freethinker and Christian read the record of both cases, but it is the Freethinker alone whose philosophy of life is wide enough to explain both. The Freethinker knows that the feeling of comfort and the fact of truth are two distinct things. They may coalesce,

but they may be as far asunder as the poles. A delusion may be as consoling as a reality provided it be accepted as genuine. The soldier with his copy of Ruskin does not prove the truth of the teachings of the *Crown of Wild Olive*, does not prove that Ruskin said the last word or even the truest word on the subjects dealt with therein. Neither does the consolation which religion gives some people prove the truth of its teachings. The comfort which religion brings is a product of the belief in religion. The consolation that comes from reading a volume of essays is a product of the conviction of the truth of the message delivered, or a sense of the beauty of the language in which the book is written. Both cases illustrate the power of belief, and that no Freethinker was ever stupid enough to question. The finest literature in the world would bring small comfort to a man who was convinced that he stood in deadly need of a priest, and the presence of a priest would be quite useless to a man who believed that all the religions of the world were so many geographical absurdities. Comfort does not produce conviction, it follows it. The truth and the social value of convictions are quite distinct questions.

There is here a confusion of values, and for this we have to thank the influence of the Churches. Because the service of the priest is sought by some we are asked to believe that it is necessary to all. But the essential value of a thing is shown, not by the number of people who get on with it, but by the number that can get on without it. The canon of agreement and difference is applicable whether we are dealing with human nature or conducting an ordinary scientific experiment. Thus, the indispensability of meat-eating is not shown by the number of people who swear that they cannot work without it, but by noting how people fare in its absence. The drinker does not confound the abstainer;

it is the other way about. In the same way there is nothing of evidential value in the protests of those who say that human nature cannot get along without religion. We have to test the statement by the cases where religion is absent. And here, it is not the Christian that confounds the Freethinker, it is the Freethinker who confounds the Christian. If the religious view of life is correct the Freethinker should be a very rare bird indeed; he should be clearly recognizable as a departure from the normal type, and, in fact, he was always so represented in religious literature until he disproved the legend by multiplying himself with confusing rapidity. Now it is the Freethinker who will not fit into the Christian scheme of things. It is puzzling to see what can be done with a man who repudiates the religious idea in theory and fact, root and branch, and yet appears to be getting on quite well in its absence. That is the awkward fact that will not fit in with the religious theory. And, other things equal, one man without religion is greater evidential value than five hundred with it. All the five hundred prove at the most is that human nature can get on with religion, but the one case proves that human nature can get on without it, and that challenges the whole religious position. And unless we take up the rather absurd position that the non-religious man is a sheer abnormality, this consideration at once reduces religion from a necessity to a luxury or a dissipation.

The bearing of this on our attitude towards such a fact as death should be obvious. During the European war death from being an ever-present fact became an obtrusive one. Day after day we received news of the death of friend or relative, and those who escaped that degree of intimacy with the unpleasant visitor, met him in the columns of the daily press. And the Christian clergy would have been untrue to their traditions and

to their interests—and there is no corporate body more alert in these directions—if they had not tried to exploit the situation to the utmost. There was nothing new in the tactics employed, it was the special circumstances that gave them a little more force than was usual. The following, for example, may be accepted as typical: —

> The weight of our sorrow is immensely lightened if we can feel sure that one whom we have loved and lost has but ascended to spheres of further development, education, service, achievement, where, by and by, we shall rejoin him.

Quite a common statement, and one which by long usage has become almost immune from criticism. And yet it has about as much relation to fact as have the stories of death-bed conversions, or of people dying and shrieking for Jesus to save them. One may, indeed, apply a rough and ready test by an appeal to facts. How many cases has the reader of these lines come across in which religion has made people calmer and more resigned in the presence of death than others have been who were quite destitute of belief in religion? Of course, religious folk will repeat religious phrases, they will attend church, they will listen to the ministrations of their favourite clergyman, and they will say that their religion brings them comfort. But if one gets below the sterotyped phraseology and puts on one side also the sophisticated attitude in relation to religion, one quite fails to detect any respect in which the Freethinking parent differs from the Christian one. Does the religious parent grieve less? Does he bear the blow with greater fortitude? Is his grief of shorter duration? To anyone who will open his eyes the talk of the comfort of religion will appear to be largely cant. There are differences due to char-

acter, to temperament, to training; there is a use of traditional phrases in the one case that is absent in the other, but the incidence of a deep sorrow only serves to show how superficial are the vapourings of religion to a civilized mind, and how each one of us is thrown back upon those deeper feelings that are inseparable from a common humanity. The thought of an only son who is living with the angels brings no real solace to a parent's mind. Whatever genuine comfort is available must come from the thought of a life that has been well lived, from the sympathetic presence of friends, from the silent handclasp, which on such occasions is so often more eloquent than speech—in a word, from those healing currents that are part and parcel of the life of the race. A Freethinker can easily appreciate the readiness of a clergyman to help a mind that is suffering from a great sorrow, but it is the deliberate exploitation of human grief in the name and in the interests of religion, the manufacturing of cases of death-bed consolation and repentance, the citation of evidence to which the experience of all gives the lie, that fill one with a feeling akin to disgust.

The writer from whom I have quoted says: —

> It is, indeed, possible for people who are Agnostic or unbelieving with regard to immortality to give themselves wholly to the pursuit of truth and to the service of their fellowmen, in moral earnestness and heroic endeavour; they may endure pain and sorrow with calm resignation, and toil on in patience and perseverance. The best of the ancient Stoics did so, and many a modern Agnostic is doing so to-day.

The significance of such a statement is in no wise diminished by the accompanying qualification that Freethinkers are "missing a joy which would have

been to them a well-spring of courage and strength." That is a pure assumption. They who are without religious belief are conscious of no lack of courage, and they are oppressed by no feeling of despair. On this their own statement must be taken as final. Moreover, they are speaking as, in the main, those who are fully acquainted with the Christian position, having once occupied it. They are able to measure the relative value of the two positions. The Christian has no such experience to guide him. In the crises of life the behaviour of the Freethinker is at least as calm and as courageous as that of the Christian. And it may certainly be argued that a serene resignation in the presence of death is quite as valuable as the hectic emotionalism of cultivated religious belief.

What, after all, is there in the fact of natural death that should breed irresolution, rob us of courage, or fill us with fear? Experience proves there are many things that people dread more than death, and will even seek death rather than face, or, again, there are a hundred and one things to obtain which men and women will face death without fear. And this readiness to face or seek death does not seem to be at all determined by religious belief. The millions of men who faced death during the war were not determined in their attitude by their faith in religious dogmas. If questioned they might, in the majority of cases, say that they believed in a future life, and also that they found it a source of strength, but it would need little reflection to assess the reply at its true value. And as a racial fact, the fear of death is a negative quality. The positive aspect is the will to live, and that may be seen in operation in the animal world as well as in the world of man. But this has no reference, not even the remotest, to a belief in a future life. There are no "Intimations of Immortality" here. There is simply one

of the conditions of animal survival, developed in man to the point at which its further strengthening would become a threat to the welfare of the species. The desire to live is one of the conditions that secures the struggle to live, and a species of animals in which this did not exist would soon go under before a more virile type. And it is one of the peculiarities of religious reasoning that a will to live here should be taken as clear proof of a desire to live somewhere else.

The fear of death could never be a powerful factor in life; existence would be next to impossible if it were. It would rob the organism of its daring, its tenacity, and ultimately divest life itself of value. Against that danger we have an efficient guard in the operation of natural selection. In the animal world there is no fear of death, there is, in fact, no reason to assume that there exists even a consciousness of death. And with man, when reflection and knowledge give birth to that consciousness, there arises a strong other regarding instinct which effectively prevents it assuming a too positive or a too dangerous form. Fear of death is, in brief, part of the jargon of priestcraft. The priest has taught it the people because it was to his interest to do so. And the jargon retains a certain currency because it is only the minority that rise above the parrot-like capacity to repeat current phrases, or who ever make an attempt to analyse their meaning and challenge their veracity.

The positive fear of death is largely an acquired mental attitude. In its origin it is largely motived by religion. Generally speaking there is no very great fear of death among savages, and among the pagans of old Greece and Rome there was none of that abject fear of death that became so common with the establishment of Christianity. To the pagan, death was a natural fact, sad enough, but not of necessity terrible.

Of the Greek sculptures representing death Professor Mahaffy says: "They are simple pictures of the grief of parting, of the recollection of pleasant days of love and friendship, of the gloom of an unknown future. But there is no exaggeration in the picture." Throughout Roman literature also there runs the conception of death as the necessary complement of life. Pliny puts this clearly in the following: "Unto all, the state of being after the last day is the same as it was before the first day of life; neither is there any more variation of it in either body or soul after death than there was before death." Among the uneducated there does appear to have been some fear of death, and one may assume that with some of even of the educated this was not altogether absent. It may also be assumed that it was to this type of mind that Christianity made its first appeal, and upon which it rested its nightmare-like conception of death and the after-life. On this matter the modern mind can well appreciate the attitude of Lucretius, who saw the great danger in front of the race and sought to guard men against it by pointing out the artificiality of the fear of death and the cleansing effect of genuine knowledge.

> So shalt thou feed on Death who feeds on men,
> And Death once dead there's no more dying then.

The policy of Christianity was the belittling of this life and an exaggeration of the life after death, with a boundless exaggeration of the terrors that awaited the unwary and the unfaithful. The state of knowledge under Christian auspices made this task easy enough. Of the mediæval period Mr. Lionel Cust, in his *History of Engraving during the Fifteenth Century*, says:—

> The keys of knowledge, as of salvation, were entirely in the hands of the Church, and the lay public,

> both high and low, were, generally speaking, ignorant and illiterate. One of the secrets of the great power exercised by the Church lay in its ability to represent the life of man as environed from the outset by legions of horrible and insidious demons, who beset his path throughout life at every stage up to his very last breath, and are eminently active and often triumphant when man's fortitude is undermined by sickness, suffering, and the prospect of dissolution.

F. Parkes Weber also points out that, "It was in mediæval Europe, under the auspices of the Catholic Church, that descriptions of hell began to take on their most horrible aspects." [1] So, again, we have Sir James Frazer pointing out that the fear of death is not common to the lower races, and "Among the causes which thus tend to make us cowards may be numbered the spread of luxury and the doctrines of a gloomy theology, which by proclaiming the eternal damnation and excruciating torments of the vast majority of mankind has added incalculably to the dread and horror of death." [2]

No religion has emphasized the terror of death as Christianity has done, and in the truest sense, no religion has so served to make men such cowards in its presence. Upon that fear a large part of the power of the Christian Church has been built, and men having become so obsessed with the fear of death and what lay beyond, it is not surprising that they should turn to the Church for some measure of relief. The poisoner thus did a lucrative trade by selling a doubtful remedy for his own toxic preparation. More than anything else the fear of death and hell laid the foundation of the wealth and power of the Christian Church. If it

[1] *Aspects of Death in Art and Epigram*, p. 28.
[2] *Golden Bough*, Vol. IV., p. 136.

drew its authority from God, it derived its profit from the devil. The two truths that emerge from a sober and impartial study of Christian history are that the power of the Church was rooted in death and that it flourished in dishonour.

It was Christianity, and Christianity alone that made death so abiding a terror to the European mind. And society once Christianized, the uneducated could find no adequate corrective from the more educated. The baser elements which existed in the Pagan world were eagerly seized upon by the Christian writers and developed to their fullest extent. Some of the Pagan writers had speculated, in a more or less fanciful spirit, on a hell of a thousand years. Christianity stretched it to eternity. Pre-Christianity had reserved the miseries of the after-life for adults. Christian writers paved the floor of hell with infants, "scarce a span long." Plutarch and other Pagan moralists had poured discredit upon the popular notions of a future life. Christianity reaffirmed them with all the exaggerations of a diseased imagination. The Pagans held that death was as normal and as natural as life. Christianity returned to the conception current among savages and depicted death as a penal infliction. The Pagan art of living was superseded by the Christian art of dying. Human ingenuity exhausted itself in depicting the terrors of the future life, and when one remembers the powers of the Church, and the murderous manner in which it exercised them, there is small wonder that under the auspices of the Church the fear of death gained a strength it had never before attained.

Small wonder, then, that we still have with us the talk of the comfort that Christianity brings in the face of death. Where the belief in the Christian after-life really exists, the retention of a conviction of the saving power of Christianity is a condition of sanity.

Where the belief does not really exist, we are fronted with nothing but a parrot-like repetition of familiar phrases. The Christian talk of comfort is thus, on either count, no more than a product of Christian education. Christianity does not make men brave in the presence of death, that is no more than a popular superstition. What it does is to cover a natural fact with supernatural terrors, and then exploit a frame of mind that it has created. The comfort is only necessary so long as the special belief is present. Remove that belief and death takes its place as one of the inevitable facts of existence, surrounded with all the sadness of a last farewell, but rid of all the terror that has been created by religion.

Our dying soldier, asking for a copy of the *Crown of Wild Olive* to be buried with him, and the other who calls for priestly ministrations, represent, ultimately, two different educational results. The one is a product of an educational process applied during the darkest periods of European history, and perpetuated by a training that has been mainly directed by the self-interest of a class. The other represents an educational product which stands as the triumph of the pressure of life over artificial dogmas. The Freethinker, because he is a Freethinker, needs none of those artificial stimulants for which the Christian craves. And he pays him the compliment—in spite of his protests— of believing that without his religion the Christian would display as much manliness in the face of death as he does himself. He believes there is plenty of healthy human nature in the average Christian, and the Freethinker merely begs him to give it a chance of finding expression. In this matter, it must be observed, the Freethinker makes no claim to superiority over the Christian; it is the Christian who forces that claim upon him. The Freethinker does not assume that the

difference between himself and the Christian is nearly so great as the latter would have him believe. He believes that what is dispensable by the one, without loss, is dispensable by the other. If Freethinkers can devote themselves to "the pursuit of truth and the service of their fellow men," if they can "endure pain and sorrow with calm resignation," if they live with honour and face death without fear, I see no reason why the Christian should not be able to reach the same level of development. It is paying the Freethinker a "violent compliment," to use an expression of John Wesley's, to place him upon a level of excellence that is apparently so far above that of the average Christian. As a Freethinker, I decline to accept it. I believe that what the Freethinker is, the Christian may well become. He, too, may learn to do his duty without the fear of hell or the hope of heaven. All that is required is that he shall give his healthier instincts an opportunity for expression.

CHAPTER X.

THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.

In the preceding chapter I have only discussed the fact of death in relation to a certain attitude of mind. The question of the survival of the human personality after death is a distinct question and calls for separate treatment. Nor is the present work one in which that topic can be treated at adequate length. The most that can now be attempted is a bird's eye view of a large field of controversy, although it may be possible in the course of that survey to say something on the more important aspects of the subject.

And first we may notice the curious assumption that the man who argues for immortality is taking a lofty view of human nature, while he who argues against it is taking a low one. In sober truth it is the other way about. Consider the position. It is tacitly admitted that if human motive, considered with reference to this world alone, is adequate as an incentive to action, and the consequences of actions, again considered with reference to this world, are an adequate reward for endeavour, then it is agreed that the main argument for the belief in immortality breaks down. To support or to establish the argument it is necessary to show that life divorced from the conception of a future life can never reach the highest possible level. Natural human society is powerless in itself to realize its highest possibilities. It remains barren of what it might be, a thing that may frame ideals, but can never realize them.

Now that is quite an intelligible, and, therefore, an arguable proposition. But whether true or not, there should be no question that it involves a lower view of human nature than the one taken by the Freethinker. He does at least pay human nature the compliment of believing it capable, not alone of framing high ideals, but also of realizing them. He says that by itself it is capable of realizing all that may be legitimately demanded from it. He does not believe that supernatural hopes or fears are necessary to induce man to live cleanly, or die serenely, or to carry out properly his duties to his fellows. The religionist denies this, and asserts that some form of supernaturalism is essential to the moral health of men and women. If the Freethinker is wrong, it is plain that his fault consists in taking a too optimistic view of human nature. His mistake consists in taking not a low view of human nature, but a lofty one. Substantially, the difference between the two positions is the difference between the man who is honest from a conviction of the value of honesty, and the one who refrains from stealing because he feels certain of detection, or because he is afraid of losing something that he might otherwise gain. Thus, we are told by one writer that:—

> If human life is but a by-product of the unconscious play of physical force, like a candle flame soon to be blown out or burnt out, what a paltry thing it is!

But the questions of where human life came from, or where it will end, are quite apart from the question of the value and capabilities of human life now. That there are immense possibilities in this life none but a fool will deny. The world is full of strange and curious things, and its pleasures undoubtedly outweigh its pains in the experience of normal man or woman.

But the relations between ourselves and others remain completely unaffected by the termination of existence at the grave, or its continuation beyond. It is quite a defensible proposition that life is not worth living. So is the reverse of the proposition. But it is nonsense to say that life is a "paltry thing" merely because it ends at the grave. It is unrestricted egotism manifesting itself in the form of religious conviction. One might as well argue that a sunset ceases to be beautiful because it does not continue all night.

If I cannot live for ever, then is the universe a failure! That is really all that the religious argument amounts to. And so to state it, to reduce it to plain terms, and divest it of its disguising verbiage, almost removes the need for further refutation. But it is seldom stated in so plain and so unequivocal a manner. It is accompanied with much talk of growth, of an evolutionary purpose, of ruined lives made good, thus:

> Seeing that man is the goal towards which everything has tended from the beginning, seeing that the same eternal and infinite Energy has laboured through the ages at the production of man, and man is the heir of the ages, nothing conceivable seems too great or glorious to believe concerning his destiny.....If there is no limit to human growth in knowledge and wisdom, in love and constructive power, in beauty and joy, we are invested with a magnificent worth and dignity.

So fallacy and folly run on. What, for example, does anyone mean by man as the goal towards which everything has tended since the beginning? Whatever truth there is in the statement applies to all things without exception. It is as true of the microbe as it is of man. If the "infinite and eternal Energy" laboured to produce man, it laboured also to produce

the microbe which destroys him. The one is here as well as the other; and one can conceive a religious microbe thanking an almighty one for having created it, and declaring that unless it is to live for ever in some microbic heaven, with a proper supply of human beings for its nourishment, the whole scheme of creation is a failure. It is quite a question of the point of view. As a matter of fact there are no "ends" in nature. There are only results, and each result becomes a factor in some further result. It is human folly and ignorance which makes an end of a consequence.

After all, what reason is there for anyone assuming that the survival of man beyond the grave is even probably true? We do not know man as a "soul" first and a body afterwards. Neither do we know him as a detached "mind" which afterwards takes possession of a body. Our knowledge of man commences with him, as does our knowledge of any animal, as a body possessing certain definite functions of which we call one group mental. And the two things are so indissolubly linked that we cannot even think of them as separate. If anyone doubts this let him try and picture to himself what a man is like in the absence of a body. He will find the thing simply inconceivable. In the absence of the material organism, to which the mind unquestionably stands in the relation of function to organ, what remains is a mere blank. To the informed mind, that is. To the intelligence of the savage, who is led, owing to his erroneous conception of things, to think of something inside the body which leaves it during sleep, wanders about, and then returns on awakening, and who because of this affiliates sleep to death, the case may be different. But to a modern mind, one which is acquainted with something of what science has to say

on the subject, the conception of a mind existing apart from organization is simply unthinkable. All our knowledge is against it. The development of mind side by side with the development of the brain and the nervous system is one of the commonplaces of scientific knowledge. The treatment of states of mind as functions of the brain and the nervous system is a commonplace of medical practice. And the fact that diet, temperature, health and disease, accidents and old age, all have their effects on mental manifestations is matter of everyday observation. The whole range of positive science may safely be challenged to produce a single indisputable fact in favour of the assumption that there exists anything about man independent of the material organism.

All that can be urged in favour of such a belief is that there are still many obscure facts which we are not altogether able to explain on a purely mechanistic theory. But that is a confession of ignorance, not an affirmation of knowledge. At any rate, there does not exist a single fact against the functional theory of mind. All we *know* is decidedly in its favour, and a theory must be tested by what we know and by what it explains, not by what we do not know or by what it cannot explain. And there is here the additional truth that the only ground upon which the theory can be opposed is upon certain metaphysical assumptions which are made in order to bolster up an already existing belief. If the belief in survival had not been already in existence these assumptions would never have been made. They are not suggested by the facts, they are invented to support an already established theory, which can no longer appeal to the circumstances which gave it birth.

And about those circumstance there is no longer the slightest reason for justifiable doubt. We can trace

the belief in survival after death until we see it commencing in the savage belief in a double that takes its origin in the phenomena of dreaming and unusual mental states. It is from that starting point that the belief in survival takes its place as an invariable element in the religions of the world. And as we trace the evolution of knowledge we see every fact upon which was built the belief in a double that survived death gradually losing its hold on the human intelligence, owing to the fact that the experiences that gave it birth are interpreted in a manner which allows no room for the religious theory. The fatal fact about the belief in survival is its history. That history shows us how it began, as surely as the course of its evolution indicates the way in which it will end.

So, as with the idea of God, what we have left in modern times are not the reasons why such a belief is held, but only excuses why those who hold it should not be disturbed. That and a number of arguments which only present an air of plausibility because they succeed in jumbling together things that have no connection with each other. As an example of this we may take the favourite modern plea that a future life is required to permit the growth and development of the individual. We find this expressed in the quotation above given in the sentence " if there is no limit to human growth, etc.," the inference being that unless there is a future life there is a very sharp limit set to human growth, and one that makes this life a mockery. This plea is presented in so many forms that it is worth while analysing it a little, if only to bring out more clearly the distinction between the religious and the Freethought view of life.

What now is meant by there being no limit to human growth? If by it is meant individual growth, the reply is that there is actually a very sharp limit set to

growth, much sharper than the average person seems to be aware of. It is quite clear that the individual is not capable of unlimited growth in this world. There are degrees of capacity in different individuals which will determine what amount of development each is capable of. Capacity is not an acquired thing, it is an endowment, and the child born with the brain capacity of a fool will remain a fool to the end, however much his folly may be disguised or lost amid the folly of others. And with each one, whether he be fool or genius, acquisitions are made more easily and more rapidly in youth, the power of mental adaptation is much greater in early than in later life, while in old age the capacities of adaptation and acquisition become negligible quantities. And provided one lives long enough, the last stage sees, not a promise of further progress if life were continued, but a process of degradation. The old saying that one can't put a quart into a pint pot is strictly applicable here. Growth assumes acquisition; acquisition is determined by capacity, and this while an indefinite quantity (indefinite here is strictly referable to our ignorance, not to the actual fact) is certainly not an unlimited one. Life, then, so far as the individual is concerned, does not point to unlimited growth. It indicates, so far as it indicates anything at all, that there is a limit to growth as to all other things.

Well, but suppose we say that man is capable of indefinite growth, what do we mean? Let us also bear in mind at this point that we are strictly concerned with the individual. For if man survives death he must do it as an individual. To merely survive as a part of the chemical and other elements of the world, or, to follow some mystical theologians, as an indistinguishable part of a "world-soul," is not what people mean when they talk of living beyond the

grave. Here, again, it will be found that we have confused two quite distinct things, even though the one thing borrows its meaning from the other.

When we compare the individual, as such, with the individual of three or four thousand years ago, can we say with truth that the man of to-day is actually superior to the man of the earlier date? To test the question let us put it in this way. Does the man of to-day do anything or think anything that is beyond the capacity of an ancient Egyptian or an ancient Greek, if it were possible to suddenly revive one and to enable him to pass through the same education that each one of us passes through? I do not think that anyone will answer that question in the affirmative. Reverse the process. Suppose that a modern man, with exactly the same capacity that he now has had lived in the days of the ancient Egyptians or the ancient Greeks, can we say that his capacity is so much greater than theirs, that he would have done better than they did? I do not think that anyone will answer that question in the affirmative either. Is the soldier of to-day a better soldier, or the sailor a better sailor than those who lived three thousand years ago? Once more the answer will not be in the affirmative. And yet there are certain things that are obvious. It is plain that we all know more than did the people of long ago, we can do more, we understand the past better, and we can see farther into the future. A schoolboy to-day carries in his head what would have been a philosopher's outfit once upon a time. Our soldiers and sailors utilize, single-handed, forces greater than a whole army or navy wielded in the far-off days of the Ptolemies. We call ourselves greater, we think ourselves greater, and in a sense we are greater than the people of old. What, then, is the explanation of the apparent paradox?

The explanation lies in the simple fact that progress is not a phenomenon of individual life at all. It is a phenomenon of social existence. If each generation had to commence at the exact point at which its predecessors started it would get no farther than they got. It would be an eternal round, with each generation starting from and reaching the same point, and progress would be an inconceivable thing. But that we know is not the case. Instead of each generation starting from precisely the same point, one inherits at least something of the labours and discoveries of its predecessors. A thing discovered by the individual is discovered for the race. A thought struck out by the individual is a thought for the race. By language, by tradition, and by institutions the advances of each generation are conserved, handed on, and made part of our racial possessions. The strength, the knowledge, of the modern is thus due not to any innate superiority over the ancient, but because one is modern and the other ancient. If we could have surrounded the ancient Assyrians with all the inventions, and given them all the knowledge that we possess, they would have used that knowledge and those inventions as wisely, or as unwisely as we use them. Progress is thus not a fact of individual but of racial life. The individual inherits more than he creates, and it is in virtue of this racial inheritance that he is what he is.

It is a mere trick of the imagination that converts this fact of social growth into an essential characteristic of individual life. We speak of "man" without clearly distinguishing between man as a biological unit and man as a member of a social group developing in correspondence with a true social medium. But if that is so, it follows that this capacity for growth is, so to speak, a function of the social medium. It is conditioned by it, it has relevance only in relation to it.

Our feelings, our sentiments, even our desires, have reference to this life, and in a far deeper sense than is usually imagined. And removed from its relation to this life human nature would be without meaning or value.

There is nothing in any of the functions of man, in any of his capacities, or in any of his properly understood desires that has the slightest reference to any life but this. It is unthinkable that there should be. An organ or an organism developes in relation to a special medium, not in relation to one that—even though it exists—is not also in relation with it. This is quite an obvious truth in regard to structures, but it is not always so clearly recognized, or so carefully borne in mind, that it is equally true of every feeling and desire. For these are developed in relation to their special medium, in this case, the existence of fellow beings with their actions and reactions on each other. And man is not only a member of a social group, that much is an obvious fact; but he is a product of the group in the sense that all his characteristic human qualities have resulted from the interactions of group life. Take man out of relation to that fact, and he is an enigma, presenting fit opportunities for the wild theorizing of religious philosophers. Take him in connection with it, and his whole nature becomes susceptible of understanding in relation to the only existence he knows and desires.

The twin facts of growth and progress, upon which so much of the argument for a future life turns nowadays, have not the slightest possible reference to a life beyond the grave. They are fundamentally not even personal, but social. It is the race that grows, not the individual, he becomes more powerful precisely because the products of racial acquisition are inherited by him. Remove, if only in thought, the individual

from all association with his fellows, strip him of all that he inherits from association with them, and he loses all the qualities we indicate when we speak of him as a civilized being. Remove him, in fact, from that association, as when a man is marooned on a desert island, and the more civilized qualities of his character begin to weaken and in time disappear. Man, as an individual, becomes more powerful with the passing of each generation, precisely because he is thus dependent upon the life of the race. The secret of his weakness is at the same time the source of his strength. We are what we are because of the generations of men and women who lived and toiled and died before we were born. We inherit the fruits of their labours, as those who come after us will inherit the fruits of our struggles and conquests. It is thus in the life of the race that man achieves immortality. None other is possible, or conceivable. And to those whose minds are not distorted by religious teaching, and who have taken the trouble to analyse and understand their own mental states, it may be said that none other is even desirable.

CHAPTER XI.

EVOLUTION.

LANGUAGE, we have said above, is one of the prime conditions of human greatness and progress. It is the principal means by which man conserves his victories over the forces of his environment, and transmits them to his descendants. But it is, nevertheless, not without its dangers, and may exert an influence fatal to exact thought. There is a sense in which language necessarily lags behind thought. For words are coined to express the ideas of those who fashion them; and as the knowledge of the next generation alters, and some modification of existing conceptions is found necessary, there is nothing but the existing array of words in which to express them. The consequence is that there are nearly always subtle shades of meaning in the words used differing from the exact meaning which the new thought is trying to express. Thought drives us to seek new or improved verbal tools, but until we get them we must go on using the old ones, with all their old implications. And by the time the new words arrive thought has made a still further advance, and the general position remains. It is an eternal chase in which the pursued is always being captured, but is never caught.

Another way in which language holds a danger is that with many words, especially when they assume the character of a formula, they tend to usurp the place of thinking. The old lady who found so much consolation in the "blessed" word Mesopotamia, is not alone in using that method of consolation. It does not meet us only in connection with religion, it is

encountered over the whole field of sociology, and even of science. A conception in science or sociology is established after a hard fight. It is accepted generally, and thereafter takes its place as one of the many established truths. And then the danger shows itself. It is repeated as though it had some magical virtue in itself; it means nothing to very many of those who use it, they simply hand over their mental difficulties to its care, much as the penitent in the confessional hands over his moral troubles to the priest, and there the matter ends. But in such cases the words used do not express thought, they simply blind people to its absence. And not only that, but in the name of these sacred words, any number of foolish inferences are drawn and receive general assent.

A striking illustration of this is to be found in such a word as "Evolution." One may say of it that while it began as a formula, it continues as a fiat. Some invoke it with all the expectancy of a mediæval magician commanding the attendance of his favourite spirits. Others approach it with a hushed reverence that is reminiscent of a Catholic devotee before his favourite shrine. In a little more than half a century it has acquired the characteristics of the Kismet of the Mohammedan, the Beelzebub of the pious Christian, and the power of a phrase that gives inspiration to a born soldier. It is used as often to dispel doubt as it is to awaken curiosity. It may express comprehension or merely indicate vacuity. Decisions are pronounced in its name with all the solemnity of a "Thus saith the Lord." We are not sure that even to talk about evolution in this way may not be considered wrong. For there are crowds of folk who cannot distinguish profundity from solemnity, and who mistake a long face for the sure indication of a well-stored brain. The truth here is that what a man understands thoroughly

he can deal with easily; and that he laughs at a difficulty is not necessarily a sign that he fails to appreciate it, he may laugh because he has taken its measure. And why people do not laugh at such a thing as religion is partly because they have not taken its measure, partly from a perception that religion cannot stand it. Everywhere the priest maintains his hold as a consequence of the narcotizing influence of ill-understood phrases, and in this he is matched by the pseudo-philosopher whose pompous use of imperfectly appreciated formulæ disguises from the crowd the mistiness of his understanding.

A glance over the various uses to which the word "Evolution" is put will well illustrate the truth of what has been said. These make one wonder what, in the opinion of some people, evolution stands for. One of these uses of evolution is to give it a certain moral implication to which it has not the slightest claim. A certain school of Non-Theists are, in this matter, if not the greatest offenders, certainly those with the least excuse for committing the blunder. By these evolution is identified with progress, or advancement, or a gradual "levelling up" of society, and is even acclaimed as presenting a more "moral" view of the Universe than is the Theistic conception. Now, primarily, this ascription of what one may call a moral element to evolution is no more than a carrying over into science of a frame of mind that properly belongs to Theism. Quite naturally the Theist was driven to try and find some moral purpose in the Universe, and to prove that its working did not grate on our moral sense. That was quite understandable, and even legitimate. The world, from the point of view of the Goddite, was God's world, he made it; and we are ultimately compelled to judge the character of God from his workmanship. An attack on the moral

character of the world is, therefore, an attack on the character of its maker. And the Theist proceeded to find a moral justification for all that God had done.

So far all is clear. But now comes a certain kind of Non-Theist. And he, always rejecting a formal Theism and substituting evolution, proceeds to claim for his formula all that the Theist claimed for his. He also strives to show that the idea of cosmic evolution involves conceptions of nobility, justice, morality, etc. There is no wonder that some Christians round on him, and tell him that he still believes in a god. Substantially he does. That is, he carries over into his new camp the same anthropomorphic conception of the workings of nature, and uses the same pseudo-scientific reasoning that is characteristic of the Theist. He has formally given up God, but he goes about uncomfortably burdened with his ghost.

Now, evolution is not a fiat, but a formula. It has nothing whatever to do with progress, as such, nor with morality, as such, nor with a levelling up, nor a levelling down. It is really no more than a special application of the principle of causation, and whether the working out of that principle has a good effect or a bad one, a moralizing, or a demoralizing, a progressive, or a retrogressive consequence is not "given" in the principle itself. Fundamentally, all cosmic phenomena present us with two aspects—difference and change—and that is so because it is the fundamental condition of our knowing anything at all. But the law of evolution is no more, is nothing more serious or more profound than an attempt to express those movements of change and difference in a more or less precise formula. It aims at doing for phenomena in general exactly what a particular scientific law aims at doing for some special department. But it has no more a moral implication, or a progressive implication than

has the law of gravitation or of chemical affinity. The sum of those changes that are expressed in the law of evolution may result in one or the other; it has resulted in one or the other. At one time we call its consequences moral or progressive, at another time we call them immoral or retrogressive, but these are some of the distinctions which the human mind creates for its own convenience, they have no validity in any other sense. And when we mistake these quite legitimate distinctions, made for our own convenience, and argue as though they had an actual independent existence, we are reproducing exactly the same mental confusion that keeps Theism alive.

The two aspects that difference and change resolve themselves into when expressed in an evolutionary formula are, in the inorganic world, equilibrium, and, in the organic world, adaptation. Of course, equilibrium also applies to the organic world, I merely put it this way for the purpose of clarity. Now, if we confine our attention to the world of animal forms, what we have expressed, primarily, is the fact of adaptation. If an animal is to live it must be adapted to its surroundings to at least the extent of being able to overcome or to neutralize the forces that threaten its existence. That is quite a common-place, since all it says is that to live an animal must be fit to live, but all great truths are common-places—when one sees them. Still, if there were only adaptations to consider, and if the environment to which adaptation is to be secured, remained constant, all we should have would be the deaths of those not able to live, with the survival of those more fortunately endowed. There would be nothing that we could call, even to please ourselves, either progress or its reverse. Movement up or down (both human landmarks) occurs because the environment itself undergoes a change. Either the material

conditions change, or the pressure of numbers initiates a contest for survival, although more commonly one may imagine both causes in operation at the same time. But the consequence is the introduction of a new quality into the struggle for existence. It becomes a question of a greater endowment of the qualities that spell survival. And that paves the way to progress—or the reverse. But one must bear in mind that, whether the movement be in one direction or the other, it is still the same process that is at work. Evolution levels neither "up" nor "down." Up and down is as relative in biology as it is in astronomy. In nature there is neither better nor worse, neither high nor low, neither good nor bad, there are only differences, and if that had been properly appreciated by all, very few of the apologies for Theism would ever have seen the light.

There is not the slightest warranty for speaking of evolution as being a "progressive force," it is, indeed, not a force at all, but only a descriptive term on all fours with any other descriptive term as expressed in a natural law. It neither, of necessity, levels up nor levels down. In the animal world it illustrates adaptation only, but whether that adaptation involves what we choose to call progression or retrogression is a matter of indifference. On the one hand we have aquatic life giving rise to mammalian life, and on the other hand, we have mammalian life reverting to an aquatic form of existence. In one place we have a "lower" form of life giving place to a "higher" form. In another place we can see the reverse process taking place. And the "lower" forms are often more persistent than the "higher" ones, while, as the course of epidemical and other diseases shows certain lowly forms of life may make the existence of the higher forms impossible. The Theistic attempt to disprove the mechanistic con-

ception of nature by insisting that evolution is a law of progress, that it implies an end, and indicates a goal, is wholly fallacious. From a scientific point of view it is meaningless chatter. Science knows nothing of a plan, or an end in nature, or even progress. All these are conceptions which we humans create for our own convenience. They are so many standards of measurement, of exactly the same nature as our agreement that a certain length of space shall be called a yard, or a certain quantity of liquid shall be called a pint. To think otherwise is pure anthropomorphism. It is the ghost of God imported into science.

So far, then, it is clear that the universal fact in nature is change. The most general aspect of nature which meets us is that expressed in the law of evolution. And proceeding from the more general to the less general, in the world of living beings this change meets us in the form of adaptation to environment. But what constitutes adaptation must be determined by the nature of the environment. That will determine what qualities are of value in the struggle for existence, which is not necessarily a struggle against other animals, but may be no more than the animal's own endeavours to persist in being. It is, however, in relation to the environment that we must measure the value of qualities. Whatever be the nature of the environment that principle remains true. Ideally, one quality may be more desirable than another, but if it does not secure a greater degree of adaptation to the environment it brings no advantage to its possessor. It may even bring a positive disadvantage. In a thieves' kitchen the honest man is handicapped. In a circle of upright men the dishonest man is at a discount. In the existing political world a perfectly truthful man would be a parliamentary failure. In the pulpit a preacher who knew the truth about Chris-

tianity and preached it would soon be out of the Church. Adaptation is not, as such, a question of moral goodness or badness, it is simply adaptation.

A precautionary word needs be said on the matter of environment. If we conceive the environment as made up only of the material surroundings we shall not be long before we find ourselves falling into gross error. For that conception of environment will only hold of the very lowest organisms. A little higher, and the nature of the organism begins to have a modifying effect on the material environment, and when we come to animals living in groups the environment of the individual animal becomes partly the habits and instincts of the other animals with which it lives. Finally, when we reach man this transformation of the nature of the environment becomes greatest. Here it is not merely the existence of other members of the same species, with all their developed feelings and ideas to which each must become adapted to live, but in virtue of what we have described above as the social medium, certain "thought forms" such as institutions, conceptions of right and wrong, ideals of duty, loyalty, the relation of one human group to other human groups, not merely those that are now living, but also those that are dead, are all part of the environment to which adjustment must be made. And in the higher stages of social life these aspects of the environment become of even greater consequence than the facts of a climatic, geographic, or geologic nature. In other words, the environment which exerts a predominating influence on civilized mankind is an environment that has been very largely created by social life and growth.

If we keep these two considerations firmly in mind we shall be well guarded against a whole host of fallacies and false analogies that are placed before us as though they were unquestioned and unquestionable

truths. There is, for instance, the misreading of evolution which asserts that inasmuch as what is called moral progress takes place, therefore evolution involves a moral purpose. We find this view put forward not only by avowed Theists, but by those who, while formally disavowing Theism, appear to have imported into ethics all the false sentiment and fallacious reasoning that formerly did duty in bolstering up the idea of God. Evolution, as such, is no more concerned with an ideal morality than it is concerned with the development of an ideal apple dumpling. In the universal process morality is no more than a special illustration of the principle of adaptation. The morality of man is a summary of the relations between human beings that must be maintained if the two-fold end of racial preservation and individual development are to be secured. Fundamentally morality is the formulation in either theory or practice of rules or actions that make group-life possible. And the man who sees in the existence or growth of morality proof of a " plan " or an " end " is on all fours with the mentality of the curate who saw the hand of Providence in the fact that death came at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. What we are dealing with here is the fact of adaptation, although in the case of the human group the traditions and customs and ideals of the group form a very important part of the environment to which adaptation must be made and have, therefore, a distinct survival value. The moral mystery-monger is only a shade less objectionable than the religious mystery-monger, of whom he is the ethical equivalent.

A right conception of the nature of environment and the meaning of evolution will also protect us against a fallacy that is met with in connection with social growth. Human nature, we are often told, is always the same. To secure a desired reform, we are assured,

you must first of all change human nature, and the assumption is that as human nature cannot be changed the proposed reform is quite impossible.

Now there is a sense in which human nature is the same, generation after generation. But there is another sense in which human nature is undergoing constant alteration, and, indeed, it is one of the outstanding features of social life that it should be so. So far as can be seen there exists no difference between the fundamental capacities possessed by man during at least the historic period. There are differences in people between the relative strengths of the various capacities, but that is all. An ancient Assyrian possessed all the capacities of a modern Englishman, and in the main one would feel inclined to say the same of them in their quantitative aspect as well as in their qualitative one. For when one looks at the matter closely it is seen that the main difference between the ancient and the modern man is in expression. Civilization does not so much change the man so much as it gives a new direction to the existing qualities. Whether particular qualities are expressed in an ideally good direction or the reverse depends upon the environment to which they react.

To take an example. The fundamental evil of war in a modern state is that it expends energy in a harmful direction. But war itself, the expression of the war-like character, is the outcome of pugnacity and the love of adventure without which human nature would be decidedly the poorer, and would be comparatively ineffective. It is fundamentally an expression of these qualities that lead to the quite healthy taste for exploration, discovery, and in intellectual pursuits to that contest of ideas which lies at the root of most of our progress. And what war means in the modern State is that the love of competition and adventure, the

pugnacity which leads a man to fight in defence of a right or to redress a wrong, and without which human nature would be a poor thing, are expended in the way of sheer destruction instead of through channels of adventure and healthy intellectual contest. Sympathies are narrowed instead of widened, and hatred of the stranger and the outsider, of which a growing number of people in a civilized country are becoming ashamed, assumes the rank of a virtue. In other words, a state of war creates an environment—fortunately for only a brief period—which gives a survival value to such expressions of human capacity as indicate a reversion to a lower state of culture.

We may put the matter thus. While conduct is a function of the organism, and while the *kind* of reaction is determined by structure, the *form* taken by the reaction is a matter of response to environmental influences. It is this fact which explains why the capacities of man remain fairly constant, while there is a continuous redirecting of these capacities into new channels suitable to a developing social life.

We are only outlining here a view of evolution that would require a volume to discuss and illustrate adequately, but enough has been said to indicate the enormous importance of the educative power of the environment. We cannot alter the capacities of the individual for they are a natural endowment. But we can, in virtue of an increased emphasis, determine whether they shall be expressed in this or that direction. The love of adventure may, for example, be exhausted in the pursuit of some piratical enterprise, or it may be guided into channels of some useful form of social effort. It lies with society itself to see that the environment is such as to exercise a determining influence with regard to expressions of activity that are beneficial to the whole of the group.

To sum up. Evolution is no more than a formula that expresses the way in which a moving balance of forces is brought about by purely mechanical means. So far as animal life is concerned this balance is expressed by the phrase "adaptation to environment." But in human society the environment is in a growing measure made up of ideas, customs, traditions, ideals, and beliefs; in a word, of factors which are themselves products of human activities. And it is for this reason that the game of civilization is very largely in our own hands. If we maintain an environment in which it is either costly or dangerous to be honest and fearless in the expression of opinion, we shall be doing our best to develop mental cowardice and hypocrisy. If we bring up the young with the successful soldier or money-maker before them as examples, while we continue to treat the scientist as a crank, and the reformer as a dangerous criminal, we shall be continuing the policy of forcing the expression of human capacity on a lower level than would otherwise be the case. If we encourage the dominance of a religion which while making a profession of disinterested loftiness continues to irradiate a narrow egotism and a pessimistic view of life, we are doing our best to perpetuate an environment which emphasizes only the poorer aspects of human motive. Two centuries of ceaseless scientific activity have taught us something of the rules of the game which we are all playing with nature whether we will or no. To-day we have a good many of the winning cards in our hands, if we will only learn to play them wisely. It is not correct to say that evolution necessarily involves progress, but it does indicate that wisdom and foresight may so control the social forces as to turn that ceaseless change which is indicated by the law of evolution into channels that make for happiness and prosperity.

CHAPTER XII.

DARWINISM AND DESIGN.

The influence of the hypothesis of evolution on religion was not long in making itself felt. Professor Huxley explained the rapid success of Darwinism by saying that the scientific world was ready for it. And much the same thing may be said of the better representatives of the intellectual world with regard to the bearing of evolution on religion. In many directions the cultivated mind had for more than half a century been getting familiar with the general conception of growth in human life and thought. Where earlier generations had seen no more than a pattern to unravel there had developed a conviction that there was a history to trace and to understand. Distant parts of the world had been brought together during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, readers and students were getting familiarized with the mass of customs and religious ideas that were possessed by these peoples, and it was perceived that beneath the bewildering variety of man's mental output there were certain features which they had in common, and which might hold in solution some common principle or principles.

This common principle was found in the conception of evolution. It was the one thing which, if true, and apart from the impossible idea of a revelation, nicely graduated to the capacities of different races, offered an explanation of the religions of the world in terms more satisfactory than those of deliberate invention

or imposture. Once it was accepted, if only as an instrument of investigation, its use was soon justified. And the thorough-going nature of the conquest achieved is in no wise more clearly manifested than in the fact that the conception of growth is, to-day, not merely an accepted principle with scientific investigators, it has sunk deeply into all our literature and forms an unconscious part of popular thought.

One aspect of the influence of evolution on religious ideas has already been noted. It made the religious idea but one of the many forms that were assumed by man's attempt to reduce his experience of the world to something like an orderly theory. But that carried with it, for religion, the danger of reducing it to no more than one of the many theories of things which man forms, with the prospect of its rejection as a better knowledge of the world develops. Evolution certainly divested religion of any authority save such as it might contain in itself, and that is a position a religious mind can never contemplate with equanimity.

But so far as the theory of Darwinism is concerned it exerted a marked and rapid influence on the popular religious theory of design in nature. This is one of the oldest arguments in favour of a reasoned belief in God, and it is the one which was, and is still in one form or another, held in the greatest popular esteem. To the popular mind—and religion in a civilized country is not seriously concerned about its failing grip on the cultured intelligence so long as it keeps control of the ordinary man and woman—to the popular mind the argument from design appealed with peculiar force. Anyone is capable of admiring the wonders of nature, and in the earlier developments of popular science the marvels of plant and animal structures served only to deepen the Theist's admiration of the "divine wisdom." The examples of com-

plexity of structure, of the interdependence of parts, and of the thousand and one cunning devices by which animal life maintains itself in the face of a hostile environment were there for all to see and admire. And when man compared these with his own conscious attempts to adapt means to ends, there seemed as strong proof here as anywhere of some scheming intelligence behind the natural process.

But the strength of the case was more apparent than real. It was weakest at the very point where it should have been strongest. In the case of a human product we know the purpose and can measure the extent of its realization in the nature of the result. In the case of a natural product we have no means of knowing what the purpose was, or even if any purpose at all lies behind the product. The important element in the argument from design—that of purpose—is thus pure assumption. In the case of human productions we argue from purpose to production. In the case of a natural object we are arguing from production to an assumed purpose. The analogy breaks down just where it should be strongest and clearest.

Now it is undeniable that to a very large number of the more thoughtful the old form of the argument from design received its death blow from the Darwinian doctrine of natural selection. In the light of this theory there was no greater need to argue that intelligence was necessary to produce animal adaptations than there was to assume intelligence for the sifting of sand by the wind. As the lighter grains are carried farthest because they are lightest, so natural selection, operating upon organic variations, favoured the better adapted specimens by killing off the less favoured ones. The fittest is not created, it survives. The world is not what it is because the animal is what it is, the animal is what it is because the world is as it is.

It cannot be any different and live—a truth demonstrated by the destruction of myriads of animal forms, and by the disappearance of whole species. The case was so plain, the evidence so conclusive, that the clearer headed religionists dropped the old form of the argument from design as no longer tenable.

But the gentleman who exchanged the errors of the Church of Rome for those of the Church of England is always with us. And the believer in deity having dropped the argument from design in one form immediately proceeded to revive it in another. This was, perhaps, inevitable. After all, man lives in this world, and if proof of the existence of deity is to be gathered from his works, it must be derived from the world we know. So design *must* be found somewhere, and it must be found here. Only one chance was left. The general hypothesis of evolution—either Darwinism alone, or Darwinism plus other factors—explained the development of animal life. But that was *within* the natural process. What, then, of the process as a whole? If the hand of God could not be seen in the particular adaptations of animal life, might it not be that the whole of the process, in virtue of which these particular adaptations occurred, might be the expression of the divine intelligence? God did not create the particular parts directly, but may he not have created the whole, leaving it for the forces he had set in motion to work out his "plan." The suggestion was attractive. It relieved religion from resting its case in a region where proof and disproof are possible, and removed it to a region where they are difficult, if not impossible. So, as it was not possible to uphold the old teleology, one began to hear a great deal of the "wider teleology," which meant that the Theist was thinking vaguely when he imagined he was thinking comprehensively, and that, because he had reached a

region where the laws of logic could not be applied, he concluded that he had achieved demonstration. And, indeed, when one gets outside the region of verification there is nothing to stop one theorizing—save a dose of common-sense and a gracious gift of humour.

In another work (*Theism or Atheism*) I have dealt at length with the argument from design. At present my aim is to take the presentation of this "wider teleology" as given by a well-known writer on philosophical subjects, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, in a volume published a few years ago entitled *Humanism: Philosophical Essays*. And in doing so, it is certain that the theologian will lose nothing by leaving himself in the hands of so able a representative.

Mr. Schiller naturally accepts Darwinism as at least an important factor in organic evolution, but he does not believe that it excludes design, and he does believe that "our attitude towards life will be very different, according as we believe it to be inspired and guided by intelligence or hold it to be the fortuitous product of blind mechanisms, whose working our helpless human intelligence can observe, but cannot control."

Now within its scope Darwinism certainly does exclude design, and even though the forces represented by natural selection may be directed towards the end produced, yet so far as the play of these forces is concerned they are really self-directing, or self-contained. The argument really seems to be just mere theology masquerading as philosophy. Theories do play some part in the determination of the individual attitude towards life, but they do not play the important part that Mr. Schiller assumes they play. It is easily observable that the same theory of life held by a Christian in England and by another Christian in Asia Minor has, so far as it affects conduct, different

results. And if it be said that even though the results be different they are still there, the reply is that they differ because the facts of life compel an adjustment in terms of the general environment. Mr. Schiller admits that the "prevalent conduct and that adapted to the conditions of life must coincide," and the admission is fatal to his position. The truth of the matter is that the conditions of life being what they are, and the consequences of conduct being also what they are, speculative theories of life cannot, in the nature of the case, affect life beyond a certain point; that is, if life is to continue. That is why in the history of belief religious teachings have sooner or later to accommodate themselves to persistent facts.

Mr. Schiller brings forward two arguments in favour of reconciling Darwinism and Design, both of them ingenious, but neither of them conclusive. With both of these I will deal later; but it is first necessary to notice one or two of his arguments against a non-Theistic Darwinism. The denial of the argument from design, he says, leads farther than most people imagine: —

> A complete denial of design in nature must deny the efficacy of all intelligence as such. A consistently mechanical view has to regard all intelligence as otiose, as an "epi-phenomenal by-product" or fifth wheel to the cart, in the absence of which the given results would no less have occurred. And so, if this view were the truth, we should have to renounce all effort to direct our fated and ill-fated course down the stream of time. Our consciousness would be an unmeaning accident.

A complete reply to this would involve an examination of the meaning that is and ought to be attached to "intelligence," and that is too lengthy an enquiry

to be attempted here. It is, perhaps, enough to point out that Mr. Schiller's argument clearly moves on the assumption that intelligence is a *thing* or a quality which exists, so to speak, in its own right and which interferes with the course of events as something from without. It is quite probable that he would repudiate this construction being placed on his words, but if he does not mean that, then I fail to see what he does mean, or what force there is in his argument. And it is enough for my purpose to point out that "intelligence" or mind is not a thing, but a relation. It asserts of a certain class of actions exactly what "gravitation" asserts of a certain class of motion, and "thingness" is no more asserted in the one case than it is in the other.

Intelligence, as a name given to a special class of facts or actions, remains, whatever view we take of its nature, and it is puzzling to see why the denial of extra natural intelligence—that is, intelligence separated from all the conditions under which we know the phenomenon of intelligence—should be taken as involving the denial of the existence of intelligence as we know it. Intelligence as connoting purposive action remains as much a fact as gravity or chemical attraction, and continues valid concerning the phenomena it is intended to cover. All that the evolutionist is committed to is the statement that it is as much a product of evolution as is the shape or colouring of animals. It is not at all a question of self-dependence. Every force in nature must be taken for what it is worth, intelligence among them. Why, then, does the view that intelligence is both a product of evolution and a cause of another phase of evolution land us in self-contradiction, or make the existence of itself meaningless? The truth is that intelligence determines results exactly as every other force in

nature determines results, by acting as a link in an unending sequential chain. And the question as to what intelligence is *per se* is as meaningless as what gravitation is *per se*. These are names which we give to groups of phenomena displaying particular and differential characteristics, and their purpose is served when they enable us to cognize and recognize these phenomena and to give them their place and describe their function in the series of changes that make up our world.

Mr. Schiller's reply to this line of criticism is the familiar one that it reduces human beings to automata. He says: —

> The ease with which the Darwinian argument dispenses with intelligence as a factor in survival excites suspicion. It is proving too much to show that adaptation might equally well have arisen in automata. For we ourselves are strongly persuaded that we are not automata and strive hard to adapt ourselves. In us at least, therefore, intelligence *is* a source of adaptation.....Intelligence therefore is a *vera causa* as a source of adaptations at least coordinate with Natural Selection, and this can be denied only if it is declared inefficacious *everywhere;* if all living beings, including ourselves, are declared to be automata.

One is compelled again to point out that Darwinism does not dispense with intelligence as a factor in survival, except so far as the intelligence which determines survival is declared to be operating apart from the organisms which survive. The conduct of one of the lower animals which reacts only to the immediate promptings of its environment is of one order, but the response of another animal not merely to the immediate promptings of the environment, but to remote

conditions, as in the selection of food or the building of a home of some sort, or to the fashioning of a tool, does obviously give to the intelligence displayed a distinct survival value. And that effectively replies to the triumphant conclusion, " If intelligence has no efficacy in promoting adaptations, *i.e.*, if it has no survival value, how comes it to be developed at all? "

Darwinism would never have been able to dispense with intelligence in the way it did but for the fact that the opposite theory never stood for more than a mere collection of words. That species are or were produced by the operations of " Divine Intelligence " is merely a grandiloquent way of saying nothing at all. It is absurd to pretend that such a formula ever had any scientific value. It explains nothing. And it is quite obvious that some adaptations do, so far as we know, arise without intelligence, and are, therefore, to use Mr. Schiller's expression, automata. (I do not like the word, since it conveys too much the notion of someone behind the scenes pulling strings.) And it is on his theory that animals actually are automata. For if there be a " Divine mind " which stands as the active cause of the adaptations that meet us in the animal world, and who arranges forces so that they shall work to their pre-destined end, what is that but converting the whole of the animal world into so many automata. One does not escape determinism in this way; it is only getting rid of it in one direction in order to re-introduce it in another.

And one would like to know what our conviction that we are not automata has to do with it. Whether the most rigid determinism is true or not is a matter to be settled by an examination of the facts and a careful reflection as to their real significance. No one questions that there is a persuasion to the contrary; if there were not there would be nothing around which

controversy could gather. But it is the conviction that is challenged, and it is idle to reply to the challenge by asserting a conviction to the contrary. The whole history of human thought is the record of a challenge and a reversal of such convictions. There never was a conviction which was held more strenuously than that the earth was flat. The experience of all men in every hour of their lives seemed to prove it. And yet to-day no one believes it. The affirmation that we are "free" rests, as Spinoza said, ultimately on the fact that all men know their actions and but few know the causes thereof. A feather endowed with consciousness, falling to the ground in a zigzag manner, might be equally convinced that it determined the exact spot on which it would rest, yet its persuasion would be of no more value than the " vulgar " conviction that we independently adapt ourselves to our environment.

Mr. Schiller's positive arguments in favour of reconciling Darwinism with design—one of them is really negative—are concerned with (1) the question of variation, and (2) with the existence of progress. On the first question it is pointed out that while Natural Selection operates by way of favouring certain variations, the origin or cause of these variations remains unknown. And although Mr. Schiller does not say so in as many words, there is the implication, if I rightly discern his drift, that there is room here for a directing intelligence, inasmuch as science is at present quite unable to fully explain the causes of variations. We are told that Darwin assumed for the purpose of his theory that variations were indefinite both as to character and extent, and it is upon these variations that Natural Selection depends. This indefinite variation Mr. Schiller asserts to be a methodological device, that is, it is something assumed as the groundwork of a theory, but without any subsequent verifica-

tion, and it is in virtue of this assumption that intelligence is ruled out of evolution. And inasmuch as Mr. Schiller sees no reason for believing that variations are of this indefinite character, he asserts that there is in evolution room for a teleological factor, in other words, "a purposive direction of variations."

Now it hardly needs pointing out to students of Darwinism that indefinite variation is the equivalent of "a variation to which no exact limits can be placed," and in this sense the assumption is a perfectly sound one. From one point of view the variations must be definite, that is, they can only occur within certain limits. An elephant will not vary in the direction of wings, nor will a bird in the direction of a rose bush. But so long as we cannot fix the exact limits of variation we are quite warranted in speaking of them as indefinite. That this is a methodological device no one denies, but so are most of the other distinctions that we frame. Scientific generalizations consist of abstractions, and Mr. Schiller himself of necessity employs the same device.

Mr. Schiller argues, quite properly, that while Natural Selection states the conditions under which animal life evolves, it does not state any reason why it should evolve. Selection may keep a species stationary or it may even cause it to degenerate. Both are fairly common phenomena in the animal and plant world. Moreover, if there are an indefinite number of variations, and if they tend in an indefinite number of directions, then the variation in any one direction can never be more than an infinitesimal portion of the whole, and that this one should persist supplies a still further reason for belief in "a purposive direction of variations." Mr. Schiller overlooks an important point here, but a very simple one. It is true that any one variation is small in relation to the whole of the

possible or actual number of variations. But it is not in relation to quantity but quality that survival takes place, and in proportion to the keenness of the struggle the variation that gives its possessor an advantage need only be of the smaller kind. In a struggle of endurance between two athletes it is the one capable of holding out for an extra minute who carries off the prize.

Further, as Mr. Schiller afterwards admits, the very smallness of the number of successful variations makes against intelligence rather than for it, and he practically surrenders his position in the statement, "the teleological and anti-teleological interpretation of events will ever decide their conflict by appealing to the facts; for in the facts each finds what it wills and comes prepared to see." After this lame conclusion it it difficult to see what value there is in Mr. Schiller's own examination of the "facts." Not that it is strictly correct to say that the facts bear each view out equally. They do not, and Mr. Schiller only justifies his statement by converting the Darwinian position, which is teleologically negative, into an affirmative. The Darwinian, he says, denies intelligence as a cause of evolution. What the Darwinian does is to deny the validity of the evidence which the teleologist brings to prove his case. The Theist asserts mind as a cause of evolution. The Darwinian simply points out that the facts may be explained in quite another way and without the appeal to a quite unknown factor.

And here one might reasonably ask, why, if there is a directive mind at work, are there variations at all? Why should the "directive intelligence" not get earlier to work, and instead of waiting until a large number of specimens have been produced and then looking them over with a view to "directing" the preservation of the better specimens, why should it not set to work at the beginning and see that only the

desirable ones make their appearance? Certainly that is what a mere human intelligence would do if it could. But it is characteristic of the "Divine Intelligence" of the Theist that it never seems to operate with a tenth part of the intelligence of an ordinary human being.

Moreover, Mr. Schiller writes quite ignoring the fact that the "directive intelligence" does not direct the preservation of the better specimens. What it does, if it does anything at all, is to kill off the less favoured ones. Natural Selection—the point is generally overlooked by the Theistic sentimentality of most of our writers—does not preserve anything. Its positive action is not to keep alive but to kill. It does not take the better ones in hand and help them. It seizes on all it can and kills them. It is the difference between a local council that tried to raise the standard of health by a general improvement of the conditions of life, and one that aimed at the same end by killing off all children that failed to come up to a certain standard. The actual preservation of a better type is, so far as Natural Selection is concerned, quite accidental. So far as Natural Selection operates it does so by elimination, not by preservation.

Mr. Schiller's other plea in favour of Design is concerned with the conception of progress. He points out that while degeneration and stagnation both occur in nature, yet—

> life has been on the whole progressive; but progress and retrogression have both been effected under the same law of Natural Selection. How, then, can the credit of that result be ascribed to Natural Selection? Natural Selection is equally ready to bring about degeneration or to leave things unchanged. How, then, can it be that which determines which of the three possible (and actual) cases shall be realized? .....It cannot be Natural Selection that causes one

> species to remain stationary, another to degenerate, a third to develop into a higher form.....Some variable factor must be added to Natural Selection.

But why? Evolution, as we have pointed out in a previous chapter, makes for adaptation in terms of animal preservation. If the adaptation of an animal to its environment is secured by " degenerating " or " developing " or by remaining stationary, it will do one of the three. That is the normal consequence of Natural Selection, and it is surprising that Mr. Schiller does not see this. He is actually accusing Natural Selection of not being able to do what it does on his own showing. The proof he himself gives of this operation of Natural Selection in the examples he cites of its ineffectiveness. If Natural Selection could not make for degeneration or development, in what way would it be able to establish an equilibrium between an animal and its surroundings? Really, there is nothing that so strengthens one's conviction of the truth of the Freethought position so much as a study of the arguments that are brought against it.

Mr. Schiller is really misled, and so misleads his readers by an unjustifiable use of the word "progress." He says that evolution has been, on the whole, progressive, and appeals to " progress " as though it were some objective fact. But that is not the case. There is no " progress " in the animal world, there is only change. We have dealt with this in a previous chapter, and there is no need to again labour the point. " Progress " is a conception which we ourselves frame, and we measure a movement towards or away from this arbitrary standard of ours in terms of better or worse, higher or lower. But nature knows nothing of a higher or a lower, it knows only of changing forms more or less fitted to live in the existing environment.

Scientifically, life has not progressed, it has persisted, and a *sine qua non* of its persistence has been adaptation to environment.

Progress, then, is not a "natural" fact, but a methodological one. It is a useful word and a valuable ideal. I am not protesting against its use, only against its misuse. It is one of the many abstractions created by thinkers, and then worshipped as a reality by those who forget the origin and purpose of its existence. And in this we can see one of the fatal legacies we have inherited from Theistic methods of thinking. The belief that things are designed to be as they are comes to us from those primitive methods of thinking which personify and vitalize all natural phenomena. We have outgrown the crude frame of mind which saw direct volitional action in a storm or in the movements of natural forces. The development of civilized and scientific thinking has removed these conceptions from the minds of educated men and women, but it has left behind it as a residuum the habit of looking for purpose where none exists, and of reading into nature as objective facts our own generalizations and abstractions. And so long as we have not outgrown that habit we are retaining a fatal bar to exact scientific thinking.

Finally, and this consideration is fatal to any theory of design such as Mr. Schiller champions, adaptation is not a special quality of one form of existence, but a universal quality of all. There is not a greater degree of adaptation here and a less degree there, but the same degree in every case. There is no other meaning to adaptation except that of adjustment to surroundings. But whether an animal lives or dies, whether it is higher or lower, deformed or perfect, the adjustment is the same. That is, every form of existence represents the product of forces that have

made it what it is, and the same forces could not have produced anything different. Every body in existence, organic or inorganic, constitutes in ultimate analysis a balance of the forces represented by it. It is not possible, therefore, for the Theist to say that design is evidenced by adaptation in one case and its absence in another. There is adaptation in every case, even though it may not be the adaptation we should like to see. It is not possible for the Theist to say that the *degree* of adaptation is greater in the one case than in the other, for *that* is the same in every case. What needs to be done if design is to be established is to prove that the forces we see at work could not have produced the results that emerge without the introduction of a factor not already given in our experience. Anything else is mere waste of time.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANCIENT AND MODERN.

In the preceding chapters we have, without saying it in so many words, been emphasizing the modern as against the ancient point of view. The distinction may not at first glance appear to be of great moment, and yet reflection will prove it to be of vital significance. It expresses, in a sentence, the essence of the distinction between the Freethinker and the religionist. Objectively, the world in which we are living is the same as that in which our ancestors lived. The same stars that looked down upon them look down upon us. Natural forces affected them as they affect us. Even the play of human passion and desire was the same with them as with us. Hunger and thirst, love and hatred, cowardice and courage, generosity and greed operate now as always. The world remains the same in all its essential features; what alters is our conception of it—in other words, the point of view.

The question thus resolves itself into one of interpretation. Freethinker and religionist are each living in the same world, they are each fed with the same foods and killed with the same poisons. The same feelings move both and the same problems face both. Their differences are constituted by the canon of interpretation applied. It is on this issue that the conflict between religion and science arises. For religion is not, as some have argued, something that is supplementary or complementary to science, nor does it deal

with matters on which science is incompetent to express an opinion. Religion and science face each other as rival interpretations of the same set of facts, precisely as the Copernican and the Ptolemaic systems once faced each other as rival interpretations of astronomical phenomena. If the one is true the other is false. You may reject the religious or the scientific explanation of phenomena, but you cannot logically accept both. As Dr. Johnson said, "Two contradictory ideas may inhere in the same mind, but they cannot both be correct."

Now while it is true that in order to understand the present we must know the past, and that because the present is a product of the past, it is also true that a condition of understanding is to interpret the past by the present. In ordinary affairs this is not questioned. When geologists set out to explain the causes of changes in the earth's surface, they utilize the present-day knowledge of existing forces, and by prolonging their action backward explain the features of the period they are studying. When historians seek to explain the conduct of, say Henry the Eighth, they take their knowledge of the motives animating existing human nature, and by placing that in a sixteenth century setting manage to present us with a picture of the period. So, again, when the thirteenth century monkish historian gravely informs us that a particular epidemic was due to the anger of God against the wickedness of the people, we put that interpretation on one side and use our own knowledge to find in defective social and sanitary conditions the cause of what occurred. Illustrations to the same end may be found in every direction. It is, indeed, not something that one may accept or reject as one may take or leave a political theory, it is an indispensible condition of rational thinking on any subject whatsoever.

Accepted everywhere else, it is in connection with religion that one finds this principle, not openly challenged, for there are degrees of absurdity to which even the most ardent religionist dare not go, but it is quietly set on one side and a method adopted which is its practical negation. Either the procedure is inverted and the present is interpreted by the past, as when it is assumed that because God did certain things in the past therefore he will continue to do the same things in the present, or it is assumed that the past was unlike the present, and, therefore, the same method of interpretation cannot be applied to both cases. Both plans have the effect of landing us, if not in lunacy, at least well on the way to it.

It is indispensible to the religionist to ignore the principle above laid down. For if it is admitted that human nature is always and everywhere the same, and that natural forces always and everywhere act in the same manner, religious beliefs are brought to the test of their conformity with present day knowledge of things and all claim to objective validity must be abandoned. Yet the principle is quite clear. The claim of the prophets of old to be inspired must be tested by what we know of the conditions of "inspiration" to-day, and not by what unenlightened people thought of its nature centuries ago. Whether the story of the Virgin Birth is credible or not must be settled by an appeal to what we know of the nature of animal procreation, and not by whether our faith urges us to accept the statement as true. To act otherwise is to raise an altogether false issue, the question of evidence is argued when what is really at issue is that of credibility. It is not at all a matter of whether there is evidence enough to establish the reality of a particular recorded event, but whether our actual knowledge of natural happenings is not enough for us to

rule it out as objectively untrue, and to describe the conditions which led to its being accepted as true.

Let us take as an illustration of this the general question of miracles. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines a miracle as "A marvellous event occurring within human experience which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must, therefore, be ascribed to the special intervention of the deity or some supernatural being." That is a good enough definition, and is certainly what people have had in mind when they have professed a belief in miracles. A miracle must be something marvellous, that is, it must be unusual, and it must not be even conceivably explainable in terms of the operation of natural forces. If it is admitted that what is claimed as a miracle might be explained as the result of natural forces provided our knowledge was extensive enough and exact enough, it is confessed that miracle and ignorance are convertible terms. And while that may be true enough as a matter of fact, it would never suit the religious case to admit it in so many words.

Nor would it make the case any better to argue that the alleged miracle has been brought about by some superior being with a much greater knowledge of nature than man possesses, but which the latter may one day acquire. That is placing a miracle on the same level as a performance given by a clever conjuror, which puzzles the onlooker because he lacks the technical knowledge requisite to understand the methods employed. A miracle to be a miracle must not be in accordance with natural laws, known or unknown, it must contravene them or suspend their operation.

On the other hand, the demand made by some critics of the miraculous, namely, that the alleged miracle

shall be performed under test conditions, is absurd, and shows that they have not grasped the essential point at issue. The believer's reply to such a demand is plain and obvious. He says, a miracle is by its nature a rare event, it is performed under special circumstances to serve a special purpose. Where, then, is the reason in asking that this miracle shall be re-performed in order to convince certain people that it has already occurred? To arrange for the performance of a miracle is an absurdity. For it to become common is to destroy both its character as a miracle and the justification for its existence. A miracle must carry its own evidence or it fails of its purpose and ceases to be a miracle at all. Discussion on these lines ends, at best, in a stalemate.

It is just as wide of the mark to discuss miracles as though it were a question of evidence. What possible evidence could there be, for example, that Jesus fed five thousand people with a few loaves and fishes, and had basketfuls left at the end of the repast? Suppose it were possible to produce the sworn testimony of the five thousand themselves that they had been so fed. Would that produce conviction? Would it do any more than prove that they believed the food had been so expanded or multiplied that it was enough for them all? It would be convincing, perhaps, as proof of an act of belief. But would it prove any more than that? Would it prove that these five thousand were not the victims of some act of deception or of some delusion? A belief in a miracle, whether the belief dates from two thousand years since or from last week, proves only—belief. And the testimony of a Salvation Army convert as to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is as good, as evidence, as though we had the sworn testimony of the twelve apostles, with that of the grave-diggers thrown in.

The truth is that the question of belief in the miraculous has nothing whatever to do with evidence. Miracles are never established by evidence, nor are they disproved by evidence, that is, so long as we use the term evidence with any regard to its judicial significance. What amount or what kind of evidence did the early Christians require to prove the miracles of Christianity? Or what evidence did our ancestors require to prove to them that old women flew through the air on broomsticks, or bewitched cows, or raised storms? Testimony in volumes was forthcoming, and there is not the slightest reason for doubting its genuineness. But what amount or kind of evidence was required to establish the belief? Was it evidence to which anyone to-day would pay the slightest regard? The slightest study of the available records is enough to show that the question of evidence had nothing whatever to do with the production of the belief.

And, on the other hand, how many people have given up the belief in miracles as a result of a careful study of the evidence against them? I have never heard of any such case, although once a man disbelieves in miracles he may be ready enough to produce reasons to justify his disbelief in them. The man who begins to weigh evidence for and against miracles has already begun to disbelieve them.

The attitude of children in relation to the belief in fairies may well be taken to illustrate the attitude of the adult mind in face of the miraculous. No evidence is produced to induce the belief in fairies, and none is ever brought forward to induce them to give it up. At one stage of life it is there, at another it is gone. It is not reasoned out or evidenced out, it is simply outgrown. In infancy the child's conception of life is so inchoate that there is room for all kinds of fantastic

beliefs. In more mature years certain beliefs are automatically ruled out by the growth of a conception of things which leaves no room for beliefs that during childhood seemed perfectly reasonable.

Now this is quite on all-fours with the question of miracles. The issue is essentially one of psychology. Belief or disbelief is here mainly determined by the psychological medium in which one lives and moves. Given a psychological medium which is, scientifically, at its lowest, and the belief in the miraculous flourishes. At the other extreme miracles languish and decay. Tell a savage that the air is alive with good and bad spirits and he will readily believe you. Tell it to a man with a genuine scientific mind and he will laugh at you. Tell a peasant in some parts of the country that someone is a witch and he will at once believe it. Tell it to a city dweller and it will provide only occasion for ridicule. People who accept miracles believe them before they happen. The expressed belief merely registers the fact. Miracles never happen to those who do not believe in them; as has been said, they never occur to a critic. Those who reject miracles do so because their acceptance would conflict with their whole conception of nature. That is the sum and substance of the matter.

A further illustration may be offered in the case of the once much debated question of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament and the historicity of the figure of Jesus. It appears to have been assumed that if it could be shown that the books of the New Testament were not contemporary records the case against the divinity of Jesus was strengthened. On the other hand it was assumed that if these writings represented the narratives of contemporaries the case for the truth of the narratives was practically proven. In reality this was not the vital issue at all. It would

be, of course, interesting if it could be shown that there once existed an actual personage around whom these stories gathered, but it would make as little difference to the real question at issue as the demonstration of the Baconian authorship of *Hamlet* would make in the psychological value of the play.

Suppose then it were proven that a person named Jesus actually existed at a certain date in Judea, and that this person is the Jesus of the New Testament. Suppose it be further proven, or admitted, that the followers whom this person gathered around him believed that he was born of a virgin, performed a number of miracles, was crucified, and then rose from the dead, and that the New Testament represents their written memoirs. Suppose all this to be proven or granted, what has been established? Simply this. That a number of people believed these things of someone whom they had known. But no Freethinker need seriously concern himself to disprove this. He may, indeed, take it as the data of the problem which he sets out to solve. The scientific enquirer is not really concerned with the New Testament as a narrative of fact any more than he is concerned with Cotton Mather's *Invisible World Displayed* as a narrative of actual fact. What he is concerned with is the frame of mind to which these stories seemed true, and the social medium which gave such a frame of mind a vogue. It is not at all a question of historical evidence, but of historical psychology. It is not a question of the honesty of the witnesses, but of their ability, not whether they wished to tell the truth, or intended to tell the truth, but whether they were in a position to know what the truth was. We have not to discuss whether these events occurred, such a proposition is an insult to a civilized intelligence, the matter for dis-

cussion is the conditions that bring such beliefs into existence and the conditions that perpetuate them.

The development of social life and of education thus shifts the point of view from the past to the present. To understand the past we do not ask what was it that people believed concerning the events around them, but what do we know of the causes which produce beliefs of a certain kind. Thus, we do not really reject the story of Jesus turning water into wine because we are without legal evidence that he ever did anything of the kind, but because, knowing the chemical constituents of both water and wine we know that such a thing is impossible. It is only possible to an uninstructed mind to which water and wine differ only in taste or appearance. We do not reject the story of the demoniacs in the New Testament because we have no evidence that these men were possessed of devils, or that Jesus cast them out, but because we have exactly the same phenomena with us to-day and know that it comes within the province of the physician and not of the miracle worker. It is not a matter of evidence whether a man rose from the dead or not, or whether he was born of a virgin or not, but solely a question of examining these and similar stories in the light of present day knowledge. The "evidence" offered is proof only of belief, and no one ever questioned the existence of that. And if the proof of belief is required there is no need to go back a couple of thousand years or to consult ancient records. The testimony of a present day believer, and the account of a revival meeting such as one may find in any religious newspaper will serve equally well. As is so often the case, the evidence offered is not merely inadequate, it is absolutely irrelevant.

Past events must be judged in the light of present knowledge. That is the golden rule of guidance in

judging the world's religious legends. And that canon is fatal to their pretensions. On the one hand we see in the life of contemporary savages and in that of semi-civilized peoples all the conditions and the beliefs that meet us in the Bible and among the early Christians. And with our wider and more exact knowledge we are able to take exactly the same phenomena that impressed those of an earlier generation and explain them without the slightest reference to supernatural powers or beings. The modern mind is really not looking round for evidence to disprove the truth of Christian legends. It knows they are not true. There is no greater need to prove that the miracles of Christianity never occurred, than there is to prove that an old woman never raised a storm to wreck one of the kings of England. The issue has been changed from one of history to one of psychology. It is the present that of necessity sits in judgment on the past, and it is in the light of the knowledge of the present that the religions of the past stand condemned.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORALITY WITHOUT GOD.

THE mystery-monger flourishes almost as well in ethics as he does in theology. Indeed, in some respects he seems to have forsaken one field of exercise only to find renewed scope in the other. He approaches the consideration of moral questions with the same hushed voice and "reverential" air that is so usual in theology, and talks of the mystery of morality with the same facility that he once talked about the mystery of godliness—and with about an equal amount of enlightenment to his hearers or readers.

But the mystery of morality is nearly all of our own making. Essentially there is no more mystery in morality than there is in any other question that may engage the attention of mankind. There are, of course, problems in the moral world as there are in the physical one, and he would be a fool who pretended to the ability to satisfactorily solve them all. The nature of morality, the causes that led to the development of moral "laws," and still more to the development of a sense of morality, all these are questions upon which there is ample room for research and speculation. But the talk of a mystery is misleading and mystifying. It is the chatter of the charlatan, or of the theologian, or of the partly liberated mind that is still under the thraldom of theology. In ethics we have exactly the same kind of problem that meets us in any of the sciences. We have a fact, or a series of facts, and we seek some explanation of them. We may

fail in our search, but that is not evidence of a "mystery," it is proof only of inadequate knowledge, of limitations that we may hope the future will enable us to overcome.

For the sake of clarity it will be better to let the meaning of morality emerge from the discussion rather than to commence with it. And one of the first things to help to clear the mind of confusion is to get rid of the notion that there is any such thing as moral "laws" which correspond in their nature to law as the term is used in science. In one sense morality is not part of physical nature at all. It is characteristic of that part of nature which is covered by the human—at most by the higher animal—world. Nature can only, therefore, be said to be moral in the sense that the term "Nature" includes all that is. In any other sense nature is non-moral. The sense of values, which is, as we shall see, of the essence of the conception of morality, nature knows nothing of. To speak of nature punishing us for *bad* actions or rewarding us for *good* ones is absurd. Nature neither punishes nor rewards. She meets actions with consequences, and is quite indifferent to any moral consideration. If I am weakly, and go out on a cold, wet night to help someone in distress, nature does not act differently than it would if I had gone out to commit a murder. I stand exactly the same chances in either case of contracting a deadly chill. It is not the moral value of an action with which natural forces are concerned, but merely with the action, and in that respect nature never discriminates between the good man and the bad, between the sinner and the saint.

There is another sense in which moral laws differ from natural laws. We can break the former but not the latter. The expression so often used, "He broke a law of nature," is absurd. You cannot break a law

of nature. You do not break the law of gravitation when you prevent a stone falling to the ground; the force required to hold it in the air is an illustration of the law. It is, indeed, one of the proofs that our generalization does represent a law of nature that it cannot be "broken." For broken is here only another word for inoperative, and a law of nature that is inoperative is non-existent. But in the moral sphere we are in a different world. We not only can break moral laws, we do break them; that is one of the problems with which our teachers and moralisers have constantly to deal. Every time we steal we break the law "Thou shalt not steal." Every time we murder we break the law "Thou shalt not kill." We may keep moral laws, we ought to keep them, but we can, quite clearly, break them. Between a moral law and a law of nature there is plainly a very radical distinction. The discovery of that distinction will, I think, bring us to the heart of the subject.

Considering man as merely a natural object, or as a mere animal, there is only one quality that nature demands of him. This is efficiency. Nature's sole law is here "Be Strong." How that strength and efficiency is secured and maintained is of no consequence whatever. The heat he requires, the food he needs may be stolen from others, but it will serve. The food will not nourish the less, the fire will not warm the less. So long as efficiency is acquired it is a matter of absolute indifference how it is secured. Considered as a mere animal object it is difficult to see that morality has any meaning at all for man. It is when we come to regard him in his relation to others that we begin to see the meaning and significance of morality emerge.

Now one of the first things that strike us in connection with moral laws or rules is that they are all statements of relation. Such moral commands as "Thou

shalt not steal," " Thou shalt not kill," the commands to be truthful, kind, dutiful, etc., all imply a relation to others. Apart from this relation moral rules have simply no meaning whatever. By himself a man could neither steal, nor lie, nor do any of the things that we habitually characterize as immoral. A man living by himself on some island would be absolved from all moral law; it would have no meaning whatever for him. He would be neither moral nor immoral, he would simply be without the conditions that make morality possible. But once bring him into relations with his kind and his behaviour begins to have a new and peculiar significance, not alone to these others, but also to himself. What he does affects them, and also affects himself so far as they determine the character of his relations to these others. He must, for example, either work with them or apart from them. He must either be on his guard against their securing their own efficiency at his expense, or rest content that a mutual forbearance and trust will govern their association. To ignore them is an impossibility. He must reckon with these others in a thousand and one different ways, and this reckoning will have its effect on the moulding of his nature and upon theirs.

Morality, then, whatever else it may be, is primarily the expression of a relation. And the laws of morality are, consequently, a summary or description of those relations. From this point of view they stand upon exactly the same level as any of the arts or sciences. Moral actions are the subject matter of observation, and the determination of their essential quality or character is by the same methods as we determine the essential quality of the " facts " in chemistry or biology. The task before the scientific enquirer is, therefore, to determine the conditions which give to moral rules or " laws " their meaning and validity.

One of the conditions of a moral action has already been pointed out. This is that all moral rules imply a relation to beings of a similar nature. A second feature is that conduct represents a form of efficiency, it is a special feature of the universal biological fact of adaptation. And the question of why man has a "moral sense" is really on all fours with, and presents no greater mystery than is involved in, the question of why man has digestive organs, and prefers some kinds of food to others. Substantially, the question of why man should prefer a diet of meat and potatoes to one of prussic acid is exactly the question of why society should discourage certain actions and encourage others, or why man's moral taste should prefer some forms of conduct to other forms. The answer to both questions, while differing in form, is the same in substance.

Man as we know him is always found as a member of a group, and his capacities, his feelings, and tastes must always be considered in relation to that fact. But considering man merely as an animal, and his conduct as merely a form of adaptation to environment, the plain consideration which emerges is that even as an individual organism he is compelled, in order to live, to avoid certain actions and to perform others, to develop certain tastes and to form certain distastes. To take our previous illustration it would be impossible for man to develop a liking for life-destroying foods. It is one of the conditions of living that he shall eat only that food which sustains life, or that he shall abstain from eating substances which destroy it. But conduct at that stage is not of the kind which considers the reasons for acting; indeed, life cannot be based upon considered action, however much reason may justify the actions taken. Further, as all conscious action is prompted by the impulse to do what is

pleasant and to avoid what is unpleasant, it follows, as Spencer pointed out, that the course of evolution sets up a close relation between actions that are pleasurable in the performance and actions that are life preserving. It is one of the conditions of the maintenance of life that the pleasurable and the beneficial shall in the long run coincide.

When we take man as a member of a group we have the same principle in operation, even though the form of its expression undergoes alteration. To begin with, the mere fact of living in a group implies the growth of a certain restraint in one's relations to, and of reciprocity in dealing with, others. Men can no more live together without some amount of trust and confidence in each other, or without a crude sense of justice in their dealings with each other, than an individual man can maintain his life by eating deadly poisons. There must be a respect for the rights of others, of justice in dealing with others, and of confidence in associating with others, at least to the extent of not threatening the possibility of group life. There are rules in the game of social life that must be observed, and in its own defence society is bound to suppress those of its members who exhibit strong anti-social tendencies. No society can, for example, tolerate homicide as an admitted practice. There is, thus, from the earliest times, a certain form of elimination of the anti-social character which results in the gradual formation of an emotional and mental disposition that habitually and instinctively falls into line with the requirements of the social whole.

To use an expression of Sir Leslie Stephen's, man as a member of the group becomes a cell in the social tissue, and his fitness to survive is dependent upon, positively, his readiness to perform such actions as the welfare of the group require, and, negatively, upon his

refraining from doing those things that are inimical to social welfare.[1] Moreover, there is the additional fact that the group itself is, as a whole, brought into contact with other groups, and the survival of one group as against another is determined by the quality and the degree of cohesion of its units. From this point of view, participation in the life of the group means more than refraining from acts that are injurious to the group, it involves some degree of positive contribution to social welfare.

But the main thing to note is that from the very dawn of animal life the organism is more or less under the pressure of a certain discipline that tends to establish an identity between actions which there is a tendency to perform and those that are beneficial to the organism. In the social state we simply have this principle expressed in another way, and it gives a degree of conscious adaptation that is absent from the pre-social or even the lower forms of the social state. It is in the truly social state also that we get the full influence of what may be called the characteristically human environment, that is, the operation of ideas and ideals. The importance of this psychological factor in the life of man has been stressed in an earlier chapter. It is enough now to point out that from the earliest moment the young human being is, by a process of training, imbued with certain ideals of truthfulness, loyalty, duty, etc., all of which play their part in the moulding of his character. However much these ideals

[1] The question of what are the things that are essential to the welfare of the group, and the fact that individuals are often suppressed for doing what they believe is beneficial to the group, with the kindred fact that there may exist grave differences of opinion on the matter, does not alter the essential point, which is that there must exist sufficient conformity between conduct and group welfare to secure survival.

may vary in different societies, the fact of the part played by them in moulding character is plain. They are the dominant forces in moulding the individual to the social state, even while the expressions of the social life may be in turn checked by the fact that social conduct cannot persist if it threatens those conditions upon which the persistence of life ultimately depends.

There is one other consideration that must be noted. One very pregnant fact in life is that nature seldom creates a new organ. What it usually does is to refashion an old one, or to devote an old one to new uses. This principle may be seen clearly in operation in connection with moral evolution. On the one hand the various forces that play upon human nature drive the moral feelings deeper into it. On the other hand it develops them by their steady expansion over a wider area. Whether it is an actual fact or not—I do not stress it because the point is the subject of discussion—it is at least possible that the earliest human group is the family. And so long as that was the case such feelings of right and wrong as then existed will have been confined to the family. But when a group of families combine and form the tribe, all those feelings of confidence, justice, etc., which were formerly characteristic of the smaller group are expanded to cover the larger one. With the expansion of the tribe to the nation we have a further development of the same phenomenon. There is no new creation, there is nothing more than expansion and development.

The process does not and cannot, obviously, stop here. From the tribe to the nation, from the nation to the collection of nations which we call an empire, and from the empire to the whole of humanity. That seems the inevitable direction of the process, and there does not require profound insight to see it already on the way. Development of national life involves a

growing interdependence of the world of humankind. Of hardly any nation can it be said to-day that it is self-supporting or self-contained or independent. There is nothing national or sectarian in science, and it is to science that we have to look for our principal help. All over the world we utilize each other's discoveries and profit by each other's knowledge. Even economic interdependence carries with it the same lesson. The human environment gets gradually broader and wider, and the feelings that have hitherto been expanded over the narrower area have now to be expanded over the wider one. It is the gradual development of a human nature that is becoming adapted to a conception of mankind as an organic unit. Naturally, in the process of adaptation there is conflict between the narrower ideals, conserved in our educational influences, and the wider ones. There are still large numbers of those who, unable to picture the true nature of the evolutionary process owing to their own defective education, yet think of the world in terms of a few centuries ago, and still wave the flag of a political nationalism as though that were the end of social growth, instead of its being an early and transient expression of it. But this conflict is inevitable, and the persistence of that type can no more ensure its permanent domination than the persistence of the medicine man in the person of the existing clergyman can give permanence to the religious idea.

There is, then, no mystery about the fact of morality. It is no more of a mystery than is the compilation of the multiplication table, and it has no greater need of a supernatural sanction than has the law of gravitation. Morality is a natural fact, and its enforcement and growth are brought about by natural means. In its lower form, morality is no more than an expression of those conditions under which social life is

possible, and in its higher one, an expression of those ideal conditions under which corporate life is desirable. In studying morality we are really studying the physiology of associated life, and that study aims at the determination of the conditions under which the best form of living is possible. It is thus that here, as elsewhere, man is thrown back upon himself for enlightenment and help. And if the process is a slow one we may at least console ourselves with the reflection that the labours of each generation are making the weapons which we bring to the fight keener and better able to do their work.

CHAPTER XV.

MORALITY WITHOUT GOD.

(Continued.)

In the preceding chapter I have been concerned with providing the most meagre of skeleton outlines of the way in which our moral laws and our moral sense have come into existence. To make this as clear as possible the chapter was restricted to exposition. Controversial points were avoided. And as a matter of fact there are many religionists who might concede the truth of what has been said concerning the way in which morality has arisen, and the nature of the forces that have assisted in its development. But they would proceed to argue, as men like Mr. Balfour and Mr. Benjamin Kidd, with others of the like, have argued, that a natural morality lacks all coercive power. The Freethought explanation of morality, they say, is plausible enough, and may be correct, but in conduct we have to deal not merely with the correctness of things but with sanctions and motives that exercise a compulsive influence on men and women. The religionist, it is argued, has such a compulsive force in the belief in God and in the effect on our future life of our obedience or disobedience to his commands. But what kind of coercion can a purely naturalistic system of morals exert? If a man is content to obey the naturalistic command to practise certain virtues and to abstain from certain vices, well and good. But suppose he chooses to disregard it. What then? Above all, on what compulsion is a man to disregard his own in-

clinations to act as seems desirable to himself, and not in conformity with the general welfare? We disregard the religious appeal as pure sentimentalism, or worse, and we at once institute an ethical sentimentalism which is, in practice, foredoomed to failure.

Or to put the same point in another way. Each individual, we say, should so act as to promote the general welfare. Freethinker and religionist are in agreement here. And so long as one's inclinations jump with the advice no difficulty presents itself. But suppose a man's inclinations do not run in the desired direction? You tell him that he must act so as to promote the general well-being, and he replies that he is not concerned with the promotion of the public welfare. You say that he *ought* to act differently, and he replies, "My happiness must consist in what I regard as such, not in other people's conception of what it should be." You proceed to point out that by persisting in his present line of conduct he is laying up trouble for the future, and he retorts, "I am willing to take the risk." What is to be done with him? Can naturalism show that in acting in that way a man is behaving unreasonably, that is, in the sense that he can be shown to be really acting against his own interests, and that if he knew better he would act differently?

Now before attempting a reply to this it is worth while pointing out that whatever strength there may be in this criticism when directed against naturalism, it is equally strong when directed against supernaturalism. We can see this at once if we merely vary the terms. You tell a man to act in this or that way "in the name of God." He replies, "I do not believe in God," and your injunction loses all force. Or, if he believes in God, and you threaten him with the pains and penalties of a future life, he may reply,

"I am quite willing to risk a probable punishment hereafter for a certain pleasure here." And it is certain that many do take the risk, whether they express their determination to do so in as many words or not.

What is a supernaturalist compelled to do in this case? His method of procedure is bound to be something like the following. First of all he will seek to create assent to a particular proposition such as "God exists, and also that a belief in his existence creates an obligation to act in this or that manner in accordance with what is believed to be his will." That proposition once established, his next business will be to bring the subject's inclinations into line with a prescribed course of action. He is thus acting in precisely the same manner as is the naturalist who starts from an altogether different set of premises. And both are resting their teaching of morals upon an intellectual proposition to which assent is either implied or expressed. And that lies at the basis of all ethical teaching—not ethical practice, be it observed, but teaching. The precise form in which this intellectual proposition is cast matters little. It may be the existence of God, or it may be a particular view of human nature or of human evolution, but it is there, and in either case the authoritative character of moral precepts exists for such as accept it, and for none other. Moral practice is rooted in life, but moral theory is a different matter.

So far, then, it is clear that the complaint that Freethought ethics has nothing about it of a compulsive or authoritative character is either a begging of the question or it is absurd.

Naturalistic ethics really assert three things. The first is that the continuance of life ensures the performance of a certain level of conduct, conduct being merely one of the means by which human beings react to the

necessities of their environment. Second, it asserts that a proper understanding of the conditions of existence will in the normally constituted mind strengthen the development of a feeling of obligation to act in such and such a manner; and that while all non-reasonable conduct is not immoral, all immoral conduct is fundamentally irrational. Third, there is the further assumption that at bottom individual and general welfare are not contradictory, but two aspects of the same thing.

Concerning the second point, Sir Leslie Stephen warns us (*Science of Ethics*, p. 437) that every attempt so to state the ethical principle that disobedience will be " unreasonable " is " doomed to failure in a world which is not made up of working syllogisms." And for the other two points Professor Sorley (*Ethics of Naturalism*, p. 42) tells us that " It is difficult.....to offer any consideration fitted to convince the individual that it is reasonable for him to seek the happiness of the community rather than his own " ; while Mr. Benjamin Kidd asserts that " the interests of the individual and those of the social organism are not either identical or capable of being reconciled, as has been necessarily assumed in all those systems of ethics which have sought to establish a naturalistic basis of conduct. The two are fundamentally and inherently irreconcilable, and a large proportion of the existing individuals at any time have.....no personal interest whatever in the progress of the race, or in the social development we are undergoing."

It has already been said that however difficult it may be to establish the precise relationship between reason and ethical commands, such a connection must be assumed, whether we base our ethics on naturalistic or supernaturalistic considerations. And it cannot be denied by anyone to-day that a causal relation must

exist between actions and their consequences, whether those causal consequences be of the natural and non-moral kind, or of the more definitely moral order such as exists in the shape of social approval and disapproval. And if we once grant that, then it seems quite allowable to assume that provided a man perceives the reason underlying moral judgments, and also the justification for the sense of approval and disapproval expressed, we have as much reason for calling his conduct reasonable or unreasonable as we have for applying the same terms to a man's behaviour in dressing in view of the variations of the temperature.

Consequently, while I agree that *in the present state of knowledge* it is impossible in all cases to demonstrate that immoral conduct is irrational in the sense that it would be unreasonable to refuse assent to a mathematical proposition, there seems no justification for regarding such a state of things as of necessity permanent. If a scientific system of ethics consists in formulating rules for the profitable guidance of life, not only does their formulation presuppose a certain constancy in the laws of human nature and of the world in general, but the assumption is also involved that one day it may be possible to give to moral laws the same precision that now is attached to physiological laws and to label departure from them as "unreasonable" in a very real sense of the word.

The other objection that it is impossible to establish a "reasonable" relation between individual and social well-being arises from a dual confusion as to what is the proper sphere of ethics, and of the mutual relation of the individual and society. To take an individual and ask, Why should he act so as to promote the general welfare?" is to imply that ethical rules may have an application to man out of relation with his fellows. That, we have already seen, is quite wrong,

since moral rules fail to be intelligible once we separate man from his fellows. Discussing ethics while leaving out social life is like discussing the functions of the lungs and leaving out of account the existence of an atmosphere.

If, then, instead of treating the individual and society as two distinct things, either of which may profit at the expense of the other, we treat them as two sides of the same thing, each an abstraction when treated alone, the problem is simplified, and the solution becomes appreciably easier. For the essential truth here is that just as there is no such thing as a society in the absence of the individuals composing it, so the individual, as we know him, disappears when we strip him of all that he is in virtue of his being a part of the social structure. Every one of the characteristic human qualities has been developed in response to the requirements of the social medium. It is in virtue of this that morality has anything of an imperative nature connected with it, for if man is, to use Sir Leslie Stephen's phrase, a cell in the social tissue, receiving injury as the body social is injured, and benefitting as it is benefitted, then the refusal of a man to act so that he may promote the general welfare can be shown to be unreasonable, and also unprofitable to the individual himself. In other words, our efficiency as an individual must be measured in terms of our fitness to form part of the social structure, and consequently the antithesis between social and personal well-being is only on the surface. Deeper knowledge and a more exact understanding reveals them as two sides of the same fact.

It may be granted to Mr. Kidd that " a large proportion of the existing individuals at any time " have no *conscious* interest in " the progress of the race or in the development we are undergoing," and that is only

what one would expect, but it would be absurd to therefore come to the conclusion that no such identity of interest exists. Molière's character, who all his life had been talking prose without knowing it, is only a type of the majority of folk who all their lives are acting in accordance with principles of which they are ignorant, and which they may even repudiate when they are explained to them. From one point of view the whole object of a scientific morality is to awaken a conscious recognition of the principles underlying conduct, and by this means to strengthen the disposition to right action. We make explicit in language what has hitherto been implicit in action, and thus bring conscious effort to the aid of non-conscious or semi-conscious behaviour.

In the light of the above consideration the long and wordy contest that has been waged between "Altruists" and "Egoists" is seen to be very largely a waste of time and a splutter of words. If it can be shown on the one hand that all men are not animated by the desire to benefit self, it is as easy to demonstrate that so long as human nature is human nature, all conduct must be an expression of individual character, and that even the morality of self-sacrifice is self-regarding viewed from the personal feelings of the agent. And it being clear that the position of Egoist and Altruist, while each expressing a truth, is neither expressing the whole truth, and that each does in fact embody a definite error, it seems probable that here, as in so many other cases, the truth lies between the two extremes, and that a reconciliation may be effected along these lines.

Taking animal life as a whole it is at least clear that what are called the self-regarding feelings must come first in order of development. Even with the lower races of human beings there is less concern shown with

the feelings and welfare of others than is the case with the higher races of men. Or, again, with children we have these feelings strongest in childhood and undergoing a gradual expansion as maturity is reached. This is brought about, as was shown in the last chapter, not by the destruction of existing feelings, but by their extension to an ever widening area. There is a transformation, or an elaboration of existing feelings under the pressure of social growth. One may say that ethical development does not proceed by the destruction of the feeling of self-interest, so much as by its extension to a wider field. Ethical growth is thus on all fours with biological growth. In biology we are all familiar with the truth that maintenance of life is dependent upon the existence of harmonious relations between an organism and its environment. Yet it is not always recognized that this principle is as true of the moral self as it is of the physical structure, nor that in human evolution the existence of others becomes of increasing importance and significance. For not only do I have to adapt myself, mentally and morally, to the society now existing, but also to societies that have long since passed away and have left their contribution to the building up of *my* environment in the shape of institutions and beliefs and literature.

We have in this one more illustration that while the environment of the animal is overwhelmingly physical in character, that of man tends to become overwhelmingly social or psychological. Desires are created that can only be gratified by the presence and the labour of others. Feelings arise that have direct reference to others, and in numerous ways a body of " altruistic " feeling is created. So by social growth first, and afterwards by reflection, man is taught that the only life that is enjoyable to himself is one that is lived in the

companionship and by the co-operation of others. As Professor Zeigler well puts the process:—

> Not only on the one hand does it concern the interests of the general welfare that every individual should take care of himself outwardly and inwardly; maintain his health; cultivate his faculties and powers; sustain his position, honour, and worth, and so his own welfare being secured, diffuse around him happiness and comfort; but also, on the other hand, it concerns the personal, well understood interests of the individual himself that he should promote the interests of others, contribute to their happiness, serve their interests, and even make sacrifices for them. Just as one forgoes a momentary pleasure in order to secure a lasting and greater enjoyment, so the individual willingly sacrifices his personal welfare and comfort for the sake of society in order to share in the welfare of this society; he buries his individual well-being in order that he may see it rise in richer and fuller abundance in the welfare and happiness of the whole community (*Social Ethics*, pp. 59-60).

These motives are not of necessity conscious ones. No one imagines that before performing a social action each one sits down and goes through a more or less elaborate calculation. All that has been written on this head concerning a "Utilitarian calculus" is poor fun and quite beside the mark. In this matter, as in so many others, it is the evolutionary process which demands consideration, and generations of social struggle, by weeding out individuals whose inclinations were of a pronounced anti-social kind, and tribes in which the cohesion between its members was weak, have resulted in bringing about more or less of an identification between individual desires and the general welfare. It is not a question of conscious evolution so much as of our becoming conscious of an

evolution that is taking place, and in discussing the nature of morals one is bound to go beyond the expressed reasons for conduct—more often wrong than right—and discover the deeper and truer causes of instincts and actions. When this is done it will be found that while it is absolutely impossible to destroy the connection between conduct and self-regarding actions, there is proceeding a growing identity between the gratification of desire and the well-being of the whole. This will be, not because of some fantastical or ascetic teaching of self-sacrifice, but because man being an expression of social life is bound to find in activities that have a social reference the beginning and end of his conduct.

The fears of a morality without God are, therefore, quite unfounded. If what has been said be granted, it follows that all ethical rules are primarily on the same level as a generalization in any of the sciences. Just as the "laws" of astronomy or of biology reduce to order the apparently chaotic phenomena of their respective departments, so ethical laws seek to reduce to an intelligible order the conditions of individual and social betterment. There can be no ultimate antithesis between individual reason and the highest form of social conduct, although there may exist an apparent conflict between the two, chiefly owing to the fact that we are often unable to trace the remote effects of conduct on self and society. Nor can there be an ultimate or permanent conflict between the true interests of the individual and of society at large. That such an opposition does exist in the minds of many is true, but it is here worthy of note that the clearest and most profound thinkers have always found in the field of social effort the best sphere for the gratification of their desires. And here again we may confidently hope that an increased and more accurate appreciation of

the causes that determine human welfare will do much to diminish this antagonism. At any rate it is clear that human nature has been moulded in accordance with the reactions of self and society in such a way that even the self has become an expression of social life, and with this dual aspect before us there is no reason why emphasis should be laid on one factor rather than on the other.

To sum up. Eliminating the form of coercion that is represented by a policeman, earthly or otherwise, we may safely say that a naturalistic ethics has all the coercive force that can be possessed by any system. And it has this advantage over the coercive force of the supernaturalist, that while the latter tends to weaken with the advance of intelligence, the former gains strength as men and women begin to more clearly appreciate the true conditions of social life and development. It is in this way that there is finally established a connection between what is " reasonable " and what is right. In this case it is the function of reason to discover the forces that have made for the moralization —really the socialization—of man, and so strengthen man's moral nature by demonstrating the fundamental identity between his own welfare and that of the group to which he belongs. That the coercion may in some cases be quite ineffective must be admitted. There will always, one fancies, be cases where the personal character refuses to adapt itself to the current social state. That is a form of mal-adaptation which society will always have to face, exactly as it has to face cases of atavism in other directions. But the socializing and moralizing process continues. And however much this may be, in its earlier stages, entangled with conceptions of the supernatural, it is certain that growth will involve the disappearance of that factor here as it has done elsewhere.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRISTIANITY AND MORALITY.

THE association of religion with morality is a very ancient one. This is not because the one is impossible without the other, we have already shown that this is not the case. The reason is that unless religious beliefs are associated with certain essential social activities their continuance is almost impossible. Thus it happens in the course of social evolution that just in proportion as man learns to rely upon the purely social activities to that extent religion is driven to dwell more upon them and to claim kinship with them.

While this is true of religions in general, it applies with peculiar force to Christianity. And in the last two or three centuries we have seen the emphasis gradually shifted from a set of doctrines, upon the acceptance of which man's eternal salvation depends, to a number of ethical and social teachings with which Christianity, as such, has no vital concern. The present generation of Christian believers has had what is called the moral aspect of Christianity so constantly impressed upon them, and the essential and doctrinal aspect so slurred over, that many of them have come to accept the moral teaching associated with Christianity as its most important aspect. More than that, they have come to regard the immense superiority of Christianity as one of those statements the truth of which can be doubted by none but the most obtuse. To have this alleged superiority of Christian ethical teaching questioned appears to them proof of some lack of moral development on the part of the questioner.

To this type of believer it will come with something of a shock to be told quite plainly and without either circumlocution or apology that his religion is of an intensely selfish and egoistic character, and that its ethical influence is of a kind that is far from admirable. It will shock him because he has for so long been told that his religion is the very quintessence of unselfishness, he has for so long been telling it to others, and he has been able for so many generations to make it uncomfortable for all those who took an opposite view, that he has camouflaged both the nature of his own motives and the tendency of his religion.

From one point of view this is part of the general scheme in virtue of which the Christian Church has given currency to the legend that the doctrines taught by it represented a tremendous advance in the development of the race. In sober truth it represented nothing of the kind. That the elements of Christian religious teaching existed long before Christianity as a religious system was known to the world is now a commonplace with all students of comparative religions, and is admitted by most Christian writers of repute. Even in form the Christian doctrines represented but a small advance upon their pagan prototypes, but it is only when one bears in mind the fact that the best minds of antiquity were rapidly throwing off these superstitions and leading the world to a more enlightened view of things, we realize that in the main Christianity represented a step backward in the intellectual evolution of the race. What we then see is Christianity reaffirming and re-establishing most of the old superstitions in forms in which only the more ignorant classes of antiquity accepted them. We have an assertion of demonism in its crudest forms, an affirmation of the miraculous that the educated in the Roman world had learned to laugh at, and which is to-day

found among the savage people of the earth, while every form of scientific thought was looked upon as an act of impiety. The scientific eclipse that overtook the old pagan civilization was one of the inevitable consequences of the triumph of Christianity. From the point of view of general culture the retrogressive nature of Christianity is unmistakable. It has yet to be recognized that the same statement holds good in relation even to religion. One day the world will appreciate the fact that no greater disaster ever overtook the world than the triumph of the Christian Church.

For the moment, however, we are only concerned with the relation of Christianity to morality. And here my thesis is that Christianity is an essentially selfish creed masking its egoistic impulses under a cover of unselfishness and self-sacrifice. To that it will probably be said that the charge breaks down on the fact that Christian teaching is full of the exhortation that this world is of no moment, that we gain salvation by learning to ignore its temptations and to forgo its pleasures, and that it is, above all other faiths, the religion of personal sacrifice. And that this teaching is there it would be stupid to deny. But this does not disprove what has been said, indeed, analysis only serves to make the truth still plainer. That many Christians have given up the prizes of the world is too plain to be denied; that they have forsaken all that many struggle to possess is also plain. But when this has been admitted there still remains the truth that there is a vital distinction in the consideration of whether a man gives up the world in order to save his own soul, or whether he saves his soul as a consequence of losing the world. In this matter it is the aim that is important, not only to the outsider who may be passing judgment, but more importantly to the agent himself.

It is the effect of the motive on character with its subsequent flowering in social life that must be considered.

The first count in the indictment here is that the Christian appeal is essentially a selfish one. The aim is not the saving of others but of one's self. If other people must be saved it is because their salvation is believed to be essential to the saving of one's own soul. That this involves, or may involve, a surrender of one's worldly possessions or comfort, is of no moment. Men will forgo many pleasures and give up much when they have what they believe to be a greater purpose in view. We see this in directions quite unconnected with religion. Politics will show us examples of men who have forsaken many of what are to others the comforts of life in the hopes of gaining power and fame. Others will deny themselves many pleasures in the prospect of achieving some end which to them is of far greater value than the things they are renouncing. And it is the same principle that operates in the case of religious devotees. There is no reason to doubt but that when a young woman forsakes the world and goes into a cloister she is surrendering much that has considerable attractions for her. But what she gives is to her of small importance to what she gains in return. And if one believed in Christianity, in immortal damnation, with the intensity of the great Christian types of character, it would be foolish not to surrender things of so little value for others of so great and transcendent importance.

To do Christians justice they have not usually made a secret of their aim. Right through Christian literature there runs the teaching that it is the desire of personal and immortal salvation that inspires them, and they have affirmed over and over again that but for the prospect of being paid back with tremendous interest in the next world they could see no reason for

being good in this one. That is emphatically the teaching of the New Testament and of the greatest of Christian characters. You are to give in secret that you may be rewarded openly, to cast your bread upon the waters that it may be returned to you, and Paul's counsel is that if there be no resurrection from the dead then we may eat, drink, and be merry for death only is before us. Thus, what you do is in the nature of a deliberate and conscious investment on which you will receive a handsome dividend in the next world. And your readiness to invest will be exactly proportionate to your conviction of the soundness of the security. But there is in all this no perception of the truly ethical basis of conduct, no indication of the inevitable consequences of conduct on character. What is good is determined by what it is believed will save one's own soul and increase the dividend in the next world. What is bad is anything that will imperil the security. It is essentially an appeal to what is grasping and selfish in human nature, and while you may hide the true character of a thing by the lavish use of attractive phrases, you cannot hinder it working out its consequences in actual life. And the consequence of this has been that while Christian teaching has been lavish in the use of attractive phrases its actual result has been to create a type of character that has been not so much immoral as *amoral*. And with that type the good that has been done on the one side has been more than counterbalanced by the evil done on the other.

What the typical Christian character had in mind in all that he did was neither the removal of suffering nor of injustice, but the salvation of his own soul. That justified everything so long as it was believed to contribute to that end. The social consequences of what was done simply did not count. And if, instead of

taking mere phrases from the principal Christian writers, we carefully examine their meaning we shall see that they were strangely devoid of what is now understood by the expression "moral incentive." The more impressive the outbreak of Christian piety the clearer does this become. No one could have illustrated the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice better than did the saints and monks of the earlier Christian centuries. Such a character as the famous St. Simon Stylites, living for years on his pillar, filthy and verminous, and yet the admired of Christendom, with the lives of numerous other saints, whose sole claim to be remembered is that they lived the lives of worse than animals in the selfish endeavours to save their shrunken souls, will well illustrate this point. If it entered the diseased imagination of these men that the road to salvation lay through attending to the sick and the needy, they were quite ready to labour in that direction; but of any desire to remove the horrible social conditions that prevailed, or to remedy the injustice of which their clients were the victims, there is seldom a trace. And, on the other hand, if they believed that their salvation involved getting away from human society altogether and leading the life of a hermit, they were as ready to do that. If it meant the forsaking of husband or wife or parent or child, these were left without compunction, and their desertion was counted as proof of righteousness. The lives of the saints are full of illustrations of this. Professor William James well remarks, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, that "In gentle characters, where devoutness is intense and the intellect feeble, we have an imaginative absorption in the love of God to the exclusion of all practical human interests..... When the love of God takes possession of such a mind it expels all human loves and human uses." Of the

Blessed St. Mary Alacoque, her biographer points out that as she became absorbed in the love of Christ she became increasingly useless to the practical life of the convent. Of St. Teresa, James remarks that although a woman of strong intellect his impression of her was a feeling of pity that so much vitality of soul should have found such poor employment. And of so famous a character as St. Augustine a Christian writer, Mr. A. C. Benson, remarks:—

> I was much interested in reading St. Augustine's *Confessions* lately to recognize how small a part, after his conversion, any aspirations for the welfare of humanity seem to play in his mind compared with the consciousness of his own personal relations with God. It was this which gave him his exuberant sense of joy and peace, and his impulse was rather the impulse of sharing a wonderful and beautiful secret with others than an immediate desire for their welfare, forced out of him, so to speak, by his own exultation rather than drawn out of him by compassion for the needs of others.

That is one of the most constant features which emerges from a careful study of the character of Christian types. St. Francis commenced his career by leaving his parents. John Fox did the same. In that Puritan classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the outstanding features is the striking absence of emphasis on the value of the social and domestic virtues, and the Rev. Principal Donaldson notes this as one of the features of early Christian literature in general. Christian preaching was for centuries full of contemptuous references to "filthy rags of righteousness," "mere morality," etc. The aim of the saints was a purely selfish and personal one. It was not even a refined or a metaphysical selfishness. It was a simple

teaching that the one thing essential was to save one's own soul, and that the main reason for doing good in this world was to reap a benefit from it in the world to come. If it can properly be called morality, it was conduct placed out at the highest rate of interest. Christianity may often have used a naturally lofty character, it was next to impossible for it to create one.

If one examines the attack made by Christians upon Freethought morality, it is surprising how often the truth of what has been said is implied. For the complaint here is, in the main, not that naturalism fails to give an adequate account of the nature and development of morality, but that it will not satisfy mankind, and so fails to act as an adequate motive to right conduct. When we enquire precisely what is meant by this, we learn that if there is no belief in God, and if there is no expectation of a future state in which rewards and punishments will be dispensed, there remains no inducement to the average man or woman to do right. It is the moral teaching of St. Paul over again. We are in the region of morality as a deliberate investment, and we have the threat that if the interest is not high enough or certain enough to satisfy the dividend hunting appetite of the true believer, then the investment will be withdrawn. Really this is a complaint, not that the morality which ignores Christianity is too low but that it is too high. It is doubted whether human nature, particularly Christian human nature, can rise to such a level, and whether, unless you can guarantee a Christian a suitable reward for not starving his family or for not robbing his neighbour, he will continue to place any value on decency or honesty.

So to state the case makes the absurdity of the argument apparent, but unless that is what is meant it is difficult to make it intelligible. To reply that

Christians do not require these inducements to behave with a tolerable amount of decency is not a statement that I should dispute; on the contrary, I would affirm it. It is the Christian defender who makes himself and his fellow believers worse than the Freethinker believes them to be. For it is part of the case of the Freethinker that the morality of the Christian has really no connection with his religion, and that the net influence of his creed is to confuse and distort his moral sense instead of developing it. It is the argument of the Christian that makes the Freethinker superior to the Christian; it is the Freethinker who declines the compliment and who asserts that the social forces are adequate to guarantee the continuance of morality in the complete absence of religious belief.

How little the Christian religion appreciates the nature of morality is seen by the favourite expression of Christian apologists that the tendency of non-religion is to remove all moral "restraints." The use of the word is illuminating. To the Christian morality is no more than a system of restraints which aim at preventing a man gratifying his appetite in certain directions. It forbids him certain enjoyments here, and promises him as a reward for his abstention a greater benefit hereafter. And on that assumption he argues, quite naturally, that if there be no after life then there seems no reason why man should undergo the "restraints" which moral rules impose. On this scheme man is a born criminal and God an almighty policeman. That is the sum of orthodox Christian morality. To assume that this conception of conduct can have a really elevating effect on life is to misunderstand the nature of the whole of the ethical and social problem.

What has been said may go some distance towards suggesting an answer to the question so often asked

as to the reason for the moral failure of Christianity. For that it has been a moral failure no one can doubt. Nay, it is an assertion made very generally by Christians themselves. Right from New Testament times the complaint that the conduct of believers has fallen far short of what it should have been is constantly met with. And there is not a single direction in which Christians can claim a moral superiority over other and non-Christian peoples. They are neither kinder, more tolerant, more sober, more chaste, nor more truthful than are non-Christian people. Nor is it quite without significance that those nations that pride themselves most upon their Christianity are what they are. Their state reflects the ethical spirit I have been trying to describe. For when we wipe out the disguising phrases which we use to deceive ourselves—and it is almost impossible to continually deceive others unless we do manage to deceive ourselves—when we put on one side the "rationalizing" phrases about Imperial races, carrying civilization to the dark places of the earth, bearing the white man's burden, peopling the waste places of the earth, etc., we may well ask what for centuries have the Christian nations of the world been but so many gangs of freebooters engaged in world-wide piracy? All over the world they have gone, fighting, stealing, killing, lying, annexing, in a steadily rising crescendo. To be possessed of natural wealth, without the means of resisting aggression, has for four centuries been to invite the depredations of some one or more of the Christian powers. It is the Christian powers that have militarized the world in the name of the Prince of Peace, and made piracy a national occupation in the name of civilization. Everywhere they have done these things under the shelter of their religion and with the sanction of their creed. Christianity has offered no effective check to the

cupidity of man, its chief work has been to find an outlet for it in a disguised form. To borrow a term from the psycho-analysts, the task of Christianity has been to " rationalize " certain ugly impulses, and so provide the opportunity for their continuous expression. The world of to-day is beginning to recognize the intellectual weakness of Christianity; what it has next to learn is that its moral bankruptcy is no less assured.

One of the great obstacles in the way of this is the sentimentalism of many who have given up all intellectual adherence to the Christian creed. The power of the Christian Church has been so great, it has for so long had control of the machinery of public education and information, that many find it almost impossible to conclude that the ethical spirit of Christianity is as alien to real progress as are its cosmical teachings. The very hugeness of this century-old imposture blinds many to its inherent defects. And yet the continuous and world-wide moral failure of Christianity can only be accounted for on the ground that it had a fatal moral defect from the start. I have suggested above what is the nature of that defect. It has never regarded morality as a natural social growth, but only as something imposed upon man from without. It has had no other reason for its existence than the fear of punishment and the hope of reward. Christian morality is the morality of the stock exchange *plus* the intellectual outlook of the savage. And with that in control of national destinies our surprise should be, not that things are as they are, but rather that with so great a handicap the world has contrived to reach its present moderate degree of development.

CHAPTER XVII.

RELIGION AND PERSECUTION.

INTOLERANCE is one of the most general of what we may call the mental vices. It is so general that few people seem to look upon it as a fault, and not a few are prepared to defend it as a virtue. When it assumes an extreme form, and its consequences are unpleasantly obvious, it may meet with condemnation, but usually its nature is disguised under a show of earnestness and sincere conviction. And, indeed, no one need feel called upon to dispute the sincerity and the earnestness of the bigot. As we have already pointed out, that may easily be seen and admitted. All that one need remark is that sincerity is no guarantee of accuracy, and earnestness naturally goes with a conviction strongly held, whether the conviction be grounded on fact or fancy. The essential question is not whether a man holds an opinion strongly, but whether he has taken sufficient trouble to say that he has a right to have that opinion. Has he taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the facts upon which the expressed opinion is professedly based? Has he made a due allowance for possible error, and for the possibility of others seeing the matter from another and a different point of view? If these questions were frankly and truthfully answered, it would be found that what we have to face in the world is not so much opinion as prejudice.

Some advance in human affairs is indicated when it is found necessary to apologise for persecution, and a still greater one when men and women feel ashamed of it. It is some of these apologies at which we have now to glance, and also to determine, if possible, the probable causes of the change in opinion that has occurred in relation to the subject of persecution.

A favourite argument with the modern religionist is that the element of persecution, which it is admitted, has hitherto been found in association with religion, is not due to religion as such, but results from its connection with the secular power. Often, it is argued, the State for its own purposes has seen fit to ally itself with the Church, and when that has taken place the representatives of the favoured Church have not been strong enough to withstand the temptation to use physical force in the maintenance of their position. Hence the generalization that a State Church is always a persecuting Church, with the corollary that a Church, as such, has nothing to do with so secular a thing as persecution.

The generalization has all the attractiveness which appeals to those who are not in the habit of looking beneath the surface, and in particular to those whose minds are still in thraldom to religious beliefs. It is quite true that State Churches have always persecuted, and it is equally true that persecution on a general scale could not have been carried on without the assistance of the State. On the other hand, it is just as true that all Churches have persecuted within the limits of their opportunity. There is no exception to this rule in any age or country. On a wider survey it is also clear that all forms of religious belief carry with them a tendency to persecution more or less marked. A close examination of the facts will show that it is the tendency to toleration that is developed

by the secular power, and the opposite tendency manifested by religion.

It is also argued that intolerance is not a special quality of religion; it is rather a fault of human nature. There is more truth in this than in the previous plea, but it slurs over the indictment rather than meets it. At any rate, it is the same human nature that meets us in religion that fronts us in other matters, and there is no mistaking the fact that intolerance is far more pronounced in relation to religion than to any other subject. In secular matters—politics, science, literature, or art—opinions may differ, feelings run high, and a degree of intolerance be exhibited, but the right to differ remains unquestioned. Moreover, the settlement of opinion by discussion is recognized. In religion it is the very right of difference that is challenged, it is the right of discussion that is denied. And it is in connection with religion alone that intolerance is raised to the level of a virtue. Refusal to discuss the validity of a religious opinion will be taken as the sign of a highly developed spiritual nature, and a tolerance of diverging opinions as an indication of unbelief. If a political leader refused to stand upon the same platform with political opponents, on non-political questions, nearly everyone would say that such conduct was intolerable. But how many religious people are there who would see anything wrong in the Archbishop of Canterbury refusing to stand upon the same platform as a well-known Atheist?

We are here approaching the very heart of the subject, and in what follows I hope to make clear the truth of the following propositions: (1) That the great culture ground of intolerance is religion; (2) That the natural tendency of secular affairs is to breed tolerance; (3) That the alliance of religion with the State has fostered persecution by the State, the restraining

influences coming from the secular half of the partnership; (4) That the decline of persecution is due to causes that are quite unconnected with religious beliefs.

The first three points can really be taken together. So far as can be seen there is no disinclination among primitive peoples to discuss the pros and cons of matters that are unconnected with religious beliefs. So soon as we get people at a culture stage where the course of events is seen to be decided by human action, there goes on a tolerance of conflicting opinions that is in striking contrast with what occurs with such matters as are believed to directly involve the action of deity. One could not expect things to be otherwise. In the carrying on of warfare, as with many other tribal activities, so many of the circumstances are of a determinable character, and are clearly to be settled by an appeal to judgment and experience, that very early in social history they must have presented themselves as a legitimate field for discussion, and to discussion, as Bagehot says, nothing is sacred. And as a matter of fact we have a survival of this to-day. However intolerant the character, so long as we are dealing with secular matters it is admitted that differences of opinion must be tolerated, and are, indeed, necessary if we are to arrive at the wisest conclusion. The most autocratic of monarchs will call upon his advisers and take their dissension from his own views as a matter of course. But when we get to the field of religion, it is no longer a question of the legitimacy of difference, but of its wrongness. For a religious man to admit a discussion as to whether his religious belief is founded on fact or not is to imply a doubt, and no thoroughly religious man ever encourages that. What we have is prayers to be saved from doubt, and deliberate efforts to keep away from such conditions and circumstances

as may suggest the possibility of wrong. The ideal religious character is the one who never doubts.

It may also be noted, in passing, that in connection with religion there is nothing to check intolerance at any stage. In relation to secular matters an opinion is avowedly based upon verifiable facts and has no value apart from those facts. The facts are common property, open to all, and may be examined by all. In religion facts of a common and verifiable kind are almost wanting. The facts of the religious life are mainly of an esoteric character—visions, intuitions, etc. And while on the secular side discussion is justified because of the agreement which results from it, on the religious side the value of discussion is discounted because it never does lead to agreement. The more people discuss religion the more pronounced the disagreement. That is one reason why the world over the only method by which people have been brought to a state of agreement in religious doctrines is by excluding all who disagreed. It is harmony in isolation.

Now if we turn to religion we can see that from the very beginning the whole tendency here was to stifle difference of opinion, and so establish intolerance as a religious duty. The Biblical story of Jonah is a case that well illustrates the point. God was not angry with the rest of the ship's inhabitants, it was Jonah only who had given offence. But to punish Jonah a storm was sent and the whole crew was in danger of shipwreck. In their own defence the sailors were driven to throw Jonah overboard. Jonah's disobedience was not, therefore, his concern alone. All with him were involved; God was ready to punish the whole for the offence of one.

Now if for the ship we take a primitive tribe, and for Jonah a primitive heretic, or one who for some

reason or other has omitted a service to the gods, we have an exact picture of what actually takes place. In primitive societies rights are not so much individual as they are social. Every member of the tribe is responsible to the members of other tribes for any injury that may have been done. And as with the members of another tribe, so with the relation of the tribe to the gods. If an individual offends them the whole of the tribe may suffer. There is a splendid impartiality about the whole arrangement, although it lacks all that we moderns understand by Justice. But the point here is that it makes the heretic not merely a mistaken person, but a dangerous character. His heresy involves treason to the tribe, and in its own defence it is felt that the heretic must be suppressed. How this feeling lingers in relation to religion is well seen in the fact that there are still with us large numbers of very pious people who are ready to see in a bad harvest, a war, or an epidemic, a judgment of God on the whole of the people for the sins of a few. It is this element that has always given to religious persecutions the air of a solemn duty. To suppress the heretic is something that is done in the interests of the whole of the people. Persecution becomes both a religious and a social duty.

The pedigree of religious persecution is thus clear. It is inherent in religious belief, and to whatever extent human nature is prone to intolerance, the tendency has been fostered and raised to the status of a virtue by religious teaching and practice. Religion has served to confuse man's sense of right here as elsewhere.

We have thus two currents at work. On the one hand, there is the influence of the secular side of life, which makes normally for a greater tolerance of opinion, on the other side there is religion which can only tolerate a difference of opinion to the extent that

religious doctrines assume a position of comparative unimportance. Instead of it being the case that the Church has been encouraged to persecute by the State, the truth is the other way about. I know all that may be said as to the persecutions that have been set on foot by vested interests and by governments, but putting on one side the consideration that this begs the question of how far it has been the consequence of the early influence of religion, there are obvious limits beyond which a secular persecution cannot go. A government cannot destroy its subjects, or if it does the government itself disappears. And the most thorough scheme of exploitation must leave its victims enough on which to live. There are numerous considerations which weigh with a secular government and which have little weight with a Church.

It may safely be said, for example, that no government in the world, in the absence of religious considerations would have committed the suicidal act which drove the Moors and the Jews from Spain.[1] As a matter of fact, the landed aristocracy of Spain resisted suggestions for expulsions for nearly a century because of the financial ruin they saw would follow. It was the driving power of religious belief that finally brought about the expulsion. Religion alone could preach that it was better for the monarch to reign over a wilderness than over a nation of Jews and unbelievers. The same thing was repeated a century later in the case of the expulsion of the Huguenots from France. Here again the crown resisted the suggestions of the Church, and for the same reason. And it is significant that when governments have desired to persecute in their own interests they have nearly always found it

[1] For this, as well as for the general consequences of persecution on racial welfare, see my pamphlet *Creed and Character*.

advantageous to do so under the guise of religion. So far, and in these instances, it may be true that the State has used religion for its own purpose of persecution, but this does not touch the important fact that, given the sanction of religion, intolerance and persecution assume the status of virtues. And to the credit of the State it must be pointed out that it has over and over again had to exert a restraining influence in the quarrels of sects. It will be questioned by few that if the regulative influence of the State had not been exerted the quarrels of the sects would have made a settled and orderly life next to impossible.

So far as Christianity is concerned it would puzzle the most zealous of its defenders to indicate a single direction in which it did anything to encourage the slightest modification of the spirit of intolerance. Mohammedans can at least point to a time when, while their religion was dominant, a considerable amount of religious freedom was allowed to those living under its control. In the palmy days of the Mohammedan rule in Spain both Jews and Christians were allowed to practise their religion with only trifling inconveniences, certainly without being exposed to the fiendish punishments that characterized Christianity all over the world. Moreover, it must never be overlooked that in Europe all laws against heresy are of Christian origin. In the old Roman Empire liberty of worship was universal. So long as the State religion was treated with a moderate amount of respect one might worship whatever god one pleased, and the number was sufficient to provide for the most varied tastes. When Christians were proceeded against it was under laws that did not aim primarily to shackle liberty of worship or of opinion. The procedure was in every case formal, the trial public, time was given for the preparation of the defence, and many of the judges

showed their dislike to the prosecutions.[2] But with the Christians, instead of persecution being spasmodic it was persistent. It was not taken up by the authorities with reluctance, but with eagerness, and it was counted as the most sacred of duties. Nor was it directed against a sectarian movement that threatened the welfare of the State. The worst periods of Christian persecution were those when the State had the least to fear from internal dissension. The persecuted were not those who were guilty of neglect of social duty. On the contrary they were serving the State by the encouragement of literature, science, philosophy, and commerce. One of the Pagan Emperors, the great Trajan, had advised the magistrates not to search for Christians, and to treat anonymous accusations with contempt. Christians carried the search for heresy into a man's own household. It used the child to obtain evidence against its own parents, the wife to secure evidence against the husband; it tortured to provide dictated confessions, and placed boxes at church doors to receive anonymous accusations. It established an index of forbidden books, an institution absolutely unknown to the pagan world. The Roman trial was open, the accused could hear the charge and cite witnesses for the defence. The Christian trial was in secret; special forms were used and no witnesses for the defence were permitted. Persecution was raised to a fine art.

[2] I am taking the story of the persecutions of the early Christians for granted, although the whole question is surrounded with the greatest suspicion. As a matter of fact the accounts are grossly exaggerated, and some of the alleged persecutions never occurred. The story of the persecutions is so foreign to the temper of the Roman government as to throw doubt on the whole account. The story of there being ten persecutions is clearly false, the number being avowedly based upon the legend of the ten plagues of Egypt.

Under Christian auspices it assumed the most damnable form known in the history of the world. "There are no wild beasts so ferocious as Christians" was the amazed comment of the Pagans on the behaviour of Christians towards each other, and the subsequent history of Christianity showed that the Pagans were but amateurs in the art of punishing for a difference of opinion.

Up to a comparatively recent time there existed a practically unanimous opinion among Christians as to the desirability of forcibly suppressing heretical opinions. Whatever the fortunes of Christianity, and whatever the differences of opinion that gradually developed among Christians there was complete unanimity on this point. Whatever changes the Protestant Reformation effected it left this matter untouched. In his *History of Rationalism* Lecky has brought forward a mass of evidence in support of this, and I must refer to that work readers who are not already acquainted with the details. Luther, in the very act of pleading for toleration, excepted "such as deny the common principles of the Christian religion, and advised that the Jews should be confined as madmen, their synagogues burned and their books destroyed." The intolerance of Calvin has become a byword; his very apology for the burning of Servetus, entitled *A Defence of the Orthodox Faith,* bore upon its title page the significant sentence "In which it is proved that heretics may justly be coerced with the sword." His follower, Knox, was only carrying out the teaching of the master in declaring that "provoking the people to idolatry ought not to be exempt from the penalty of death," and that "magistrates and people are bound to do so (inflict the death penalty) unless they will provoke the wrath of God against themselves." In every Protestant country laws against heresy were

enacted. In Switzerland, Geneva, Sweden, England, Germany, Scotland, nowhere could one differ from the established faith without running the risk of torture and death. Even in America, with the exception of Maryland,[3] the same state of things prevailed. In some States Catholic priests were subject to imprisonment for life, Quaker women were whipped through the streets at the cart's tail, old men of the same denomination were pressed to death between stones. At a later date (about 1770) laws against heresy were general. "Anyone," says Fiske,—

> who should dare to speculate too freely about the nature of Christ, or the philosophy of the plan of salvation, or to express a doubt as to the plenary inspiration of every word between the two covers of the Bible, was subject to fine and imprisonment. The tithing man still arrested the Sabbath-breakers, and shut them up in the town cage in the market-place; he stopped all unnecessary riding or driving on Sunday, and haled people off to the meeting-house whether they would or no.[4]

And we have to remember that the intolerance shown in America was manifested by men who had left their own country on the ostensible ground of freedom of conscience. As a matter of fact, in Christian society genuine freedom of conscience was practically unknown. What was meant by the expression was the

[3] The case of Maryland is peculiar. But the reason for the toleration there seems to have been due to the desire to give Catholics a measure of freedom they could not have elsewhere in Protestant countries.

[4] For a good sketch of the Puritan Sunday in New England see *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, by Alice Morse Earle. For an account of religious intolerance see the account of the Blue Laws of Connecticut as contained in Hart's *American History told by Contemporaries*, Vol. I.

right to express one's own religious opinions, with the privilege of oppressing all with whom one happened to disagree. The mayority of Christians would have as indignantly repudiated the assertion that they desired to tolerate non-Christian or anti-Christian opinions as they would the charge of themselves holding Atheistic ones.

How deeply ingrained was the principle that the established religion was justified in suppressing all others may be seen from a reading of such works as Locke's *Letters on Toleration,* and Milton's *Areopagitica,* which stand in the forefront of the world's writings in favour of liberty of thought and speech. Yet Locke was of opinion that " Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an Atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all." And Milton, while holding that it was more prudent and wholesome that many be tolerated rather than all compelled, yet hastened to add " I mean not tolerated popery and open superstition, which as it extirpates all religious and civil supremacies so should itself be extirpated." In short, intolerance had become so established a part of a society saturated in religion that not even the most liberal could conceive a state of being in which all opinions should be placed upon an equal footing.

Yet a change was all the time taking place in men's opinions on this matter, a change which has in recent years culminated in the affirmation of the principle that the coercion of opinion is of all things the least desirable and the least beneficial to society at large. And as in so many other cases, it was not the gradual maturing of that principle that attracted attention so much as its statement in something like a complete and

logical form. The tracing of the conditions which have led to this tremendous revolution in public opinion will complete our survey of the subject.

It has already been pointed out that in primitive societies a very important fact is that the relation of the individual to the community is of a different nature from that which exists in a later stage of culture. The whole is responsible for the part in a very literal sense, and especially so in regard to religious beliefs. Individual rights and responsibilities have but a precarious existence at best. The individual exists far more for the benefit of the tribe than the tribe can be said to exist for the benefit of the individual. The sense of corporate responsibility is strong, and even in secular affairs we see this constantly manifested. When a member of one tribe inflicts an injury upon a member of another tribe, retaliation on any one of the group to which the offending person belongs will suffice. We see the remnants of this primitive view of life in the feuds of schoolboys, and it is also manifested in the relations of nations, which move upon a lower ethical level than do individuals. Most wars are ostensibly waged because in some obscure way the nation is held responsible for the offences of one or more individuals. And an instance of the same feeling is seen in the now obsolete practice of punishing the members of a man's family when the parents happen to have committed certain offences.

In religion, as we have already pointed out, the sense of corporate responsibility completely governs primitive man's sense of his relation to the tribal gods. In the development of the tribal chief into the tribal god the ghost is credited with much the same powers as the man, with the added terror of having more subtle and terrible ways of inflicting punishment. The man who offends the ghost or the god is a standing

danger to the whole of the tribe. The whole of the tribe becomes responsible for the offence committed, and the tribe in self protection must not alone take measures to punish the offender, but must also guard itself against even the possibility of the offence being perpetrated. The consequence is that there is not a religion in which one can fail to trace the presence of this primitive conception of personal and social responsibility, and consequently, where we cannot find persecution, more or less severe, and also more or less organized, in the interest of what is believed to be social welfare. In the case of the failure of the Spanish Armada to effect the conquest of England, the Spanish monarch was convinced that its non-success was partly due to his not having weeded out the heretics from his own dominion before troubling about the heretics abroad. And right down to our own day there has not been a national calamity the cause of which has not been found by numbers of religious people to lie in the fact that some members of the suffering nation have offended God. The heretic becomes, as we have already said, a social danger of the gravest description. Society must be guarded against his presence just as we learn to-day to protect ourselves against the presence of a death-dealing germ. The suppression of heresy thus becomes a social duty, because it protects society from the anger of the gods. The destruction of the heretic is substantially an act of social sanitation. Given the primitive conception of religion, affiliated to the existing conception of corporate responsibility, and persecution becomes one of the most important of social duties.

This, I believe, is not alone the root of persecution, but it serves to explain as nothing else can its persistence in social life and the fact of its having become almost a general mental characteristic. To realize this

one need only bear in mind the overpowering part played by religious conceptions in early communities. There is nothing done that is not more or less under the assumed control of supernatural agencies. Fear is the dominant emotion in relation to the gods, and experience daily proves that there is nothing that can make men so brutal and so callous to the sufferings of others as can religious belief. And while there has all along been a growing liberation of the mind from the control of religion, the process has been so slow that this particular product of religious rule has had time to root itself very deeply in human nature. And it is in accordance with all that we know of the order of development that the special qualities engendered by a particular set of conditions should persist long after the conditions themselves have passed away.

The conditions that co-operate in the final breaking down of the conviction of the morality of persecution are many and various. Primarily, there is the change from the social state in which the conception of corporate responsibility is dominant to one in which there is a more or less clearly marked line between what concerns the individual alone and what concerns society as a whole. This is illustrated in the growth from what Spencer called the military type of society to an industrial one. In the case of a militant type of society, to which the religious organization is so closely affiliated, a State is more self contained, and the governing principle is, to use a generalization of Sir Henry Maine's, status rather than contract. With the growth of commerce and industrialism there is developed a greater amount of individual initiative, a growing consideration for personal responsibility, and also the development of a sense of interdependence between societies. And the social developments that go on teach people, even though the lesson may be

unconsciously learned, to value each other in terms of social utility rather than in terms of belief in expressed dogmas. They are brought daily into contact with men of widely differing forms of opinion; they find themselves working in the same movements, and participating in the same triumphs or sharing the same defeats. Insensibly the standard of judgment alters; the strength of the purely social feelings overpowers the consciousness of theological differences, and thus serves to weaken the frame of mind from which persecution springs.

The growing complexity of life leads to the same end. Where the conditions of life are simple, and the experiences through which people pass are often repeated, and where, moreover, the amount of positive knowledge current is small, conclusions are reached rapidly, and the feeling of confidence in one's own opinions is not checked by seeing others draw different conclusions from the same premises. Under such conditions an opinion once formed is not easily or quickly changed. Experience which makes for wider knowledge makes also for greater caution in forming opinions and a greater readiness to tolerate conclusions of an opposite character at which others may have arrived.

Finally, on the purely intellectual side one must reckon with the growth of new ideas, and of knowledge that is in itself quite inconsistent with the established creed. If the primary reason for killing the heretic is that he is a social danger, one who will draw down on the tribe the vengeance of the gods, the strength of that feeling against the heretic must be weakened by every change that lessens men's belief in the power of their deity. And one must assume that every time a fresh piece of definite knowledge was acquired towards the splendid structure that now meets us in the

shape of modern science there was accomplished something that involved an ultimate weakening of the belief in the supremacy of the gods. The effect is cumulative, and in time it is bound to make itself felt. Religious opinion after religious opinion finds itself attacked and its power weakened. Things that were thought to be solely due to the action of the gods are found to occur without their being invoked, while invocation does not make the slightest difference to the production of given results. Scientific generalizations in astronomy, in physics, in biology, etc., follow one another, each helping to enforce the lesson that it really does not matter what opinions a man may hold about the gods provided his opinions about the world in which he is living and the forces with which he *must* deal are sound and solidly based. In a world where opinion is in a healthy state of flux it is impossible for even religion to remain altogether unchanged. So we have first a change in the rigidity of religious conceptions, then a greater readiness to admit the possibility of error, and, finally, the impossibility of preventing the growth and expression of definitely non-religious and anti-religious opinions in a community where all sorts of opinions cannot but arise.

With the social consequences of religious persecution, and particularly of Christian persecution, I have dealt elsewhere, and there is no need to repeat the story here. I have been here concerned with making plain the fact that persecution does not arise with a misunderstanding of religion, or with a decline of what is vaguely called "true religion," nor does it originate in the alliance of some Church with the secular State. It lies imbedded in the very nature of religion itself. With polytheism there is a certain measure of toleration to gods outside the tribe, because here the admitted existence of a number of gods

is part of the order of things. But this tendency to toleration disappears when we come to the monotheistic stage which inevitably treats the claim to existence of other gods in the same spirit as an ardent royalist treats the appearance of a pretender to the throne. To tolerate such is a crime against the legitimate ruler. And when we get the Christian doctrine of eternal damnation and salvation tacked on to the religious idea we have all the material necessary to give the persecutor the feeling of moral obligation, and to make him feel that he is playing the part of a real saviour to society.

At bottom that is one of the chief injuries that a religion such as Christianity inflicts on the race; it throws human feeling into some of the most objectionable forms, and provides a religious and moral justification for their expression. The very desire to benefit one's fellows, normally and naturally healthy, thus becomes under Christian influences an instrument of oppression and racial degradation. The Christian persecutor does not see himself for what he is, he pictures himself as a saviour of men's souls by suppressing the unbeliever who would corrupt them. And if Christianity be true he is correct in thinking himself such. I have no hesitation in saying that if Christianity be true persecution becomes the most important of duties. A community that is thoroughly Christian is bound to persecute, and as a mere matter of historic fact every wholly Christian community has persecuted. The community which says that a man may take any religion he pleases, or go without one altogether if he so chooses, proclaims its disbelief in the importance of religion. The measure of religious freedom is also the measure of religious indifference.

There are some experiences through which a human being may pass the effects of which he never com-

pletely outgrows. Usually he may appear to have put them quite out of his mind, but there are times when he is lifted a little out of the normal, and then the recollection of what he has passed through comes back with terrifying force. And acute observers may also be able to perceive that even in normal circumstances what he has passed through manifests itself for the worse in his everyday behaviour. So with religion and the life history of the race. For thousands of generations the race has been under the influence of a teaching that social welfare depended upon a right belief about the gods. The consequence of this has been that persecution became deeply ingrained in human nature and in the social traditions which play so large a part in the character building of each new generation. We have as yet hardly got beyond the tradition that lack of religion robs a man of social rights and dispenses with the necessity for courteous and considered treatment. And there is, therefore, small cause for wonder that the element of intolerance should still manifest itself in connection with non-religious aspects of life. But the certain thing is that throughout the whole of our social history it is religion that has been responsible for the maintenance of persecution as a social duty. Something has been done in more recent times to weaken its force, the growth of science, the rationalizing of one institution after another—in a word, the secularizing of life—is slowly creating more tolerant relations between people. But the poison is deep in the blood, and will not be eradicated in a generation. Religion is still here, and so long as it remains it will never cease—under the guise of an appeal to the higher sentiments of man—to make its most effective appeals to passions of which the best among us are most heartily ashamed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT IS TO FOLLOW RELIGION?

Books on the future of religion are numerous, and to one blessed with a sense of humour, full of entertainment. They are also not without instruction of a psychological kind. Reliable information as to what the future will be like they certainly do not give, but they do unlock the innermost desires of the writers thereof. They express what the writers of the prophecies would like the future to be. And they create the future state on earth exactly as devout believers have built up the character of their heaven beyond the clouds. Every form of faith which they disagree with is rejected as not possessing the element of vitality, with the result that there is only their own form left. And that, they triumphantly proclaim, is the religion of the future.

But the future has an old-fashioned and disconcerting habit of disappointing expectations. The factors that govern human nature are so many and so complex, their transmutations and combinations are so numerous, that it is as well to tread cautiously, and to a very considerable extent leave the future to take care of itself. At the utmost all that we can do with safety is to detect tendencies, and to hasten or retard their development as we think them good or bad. The factors that make up a science of human nature are not to-day so well-known and so well understood that we can depict the state of society a century hence with the same certainty that we can foretell the position of the planet Venus in the year 2000.

My aim in this chapter is, therefore, not to describe precisely what will be the state of society when religious belief has ceased to exist. It is rather to offer a general reply to those gloomy individuals who declare that when the aims of the Freethinker are fully realized we shall find that in destroying religion we have destroyed pretty much all that makes human life worth living. We have managed to empty the baby out with the bath.

The most general form of this fear is expressed in calling Freethought a creed of negation, or a policy of destruction, and assuring the world that mankind can never rest content with such things. That may be quite true, but we fail to see in what way it touches Freethought. A Freethought that is wholly destructive, that is a mere negation, is a creation of the pulpit, and belongs to the same class of imaginative efforts as the pietistic outbursts of famous unbelievers on their death-beds. That such things could have obtained so wide a currency, and be looked upon as quite natural occurrences, offers demonstrative evidence of the paralyzing power of Christian belief on the human mind.

As a matter of fact, neither reformers in general nor Freethinkers in particular deserve the charge of being mere destructionists. They are both far more interested in building up than they are in pulling down, and it is sheer lack of understanding that fixes the eyes of so many on one aspect of the reformer's task and so steadily ignores the other one. Of course, the phenomenon is not an unusual one. In a revolution it is the noise, the street fighting, the breaking of old rules and the shattering of established institutions that attract the most attention. The deeper aims of the revolutionists, the hidden social forces of which the revolution is the expression, the work of reconstruc-

tion that is attempted, escape notice. The old order shrieks its loudest at the threat of dissolution, the new can hardly make its voice heard. Carlyle's division of the people into the shrieking thousands and the dumb millions is eternally true. And even the millions are impressed with the importance of the thousands because of the noise they are able to make.

Actually the charge to which reformers in general are open is that of a too great zeal for reconstruction, a belittling of the difficulties that stand in the way of a radical change. They are apt to make too small an allowance for the occurrence of the unexpected and the incalculable, both of which are likely to interfere with the fruition of the most logical of schemes. And they are so obsessed with reconstruction that destruction seems no more than an incident by the way. A little less eagerness for reconstruction might easily result in a greater concern for what is being pulled down. The two greatest "destructive" movements of modern times—the French revolution of 1789 and the Russian revolution—both illustrate this point. In both movements the leading figures were men who were obsessed with the idea of building a new world. They saw this new world so clearly that the old one was almost ignored. And this is equally true of the literature that precedes and is the mouthpiece of such movements. The leading appeal is always to what is to be, what existed is only used as a means of enforcing the desirability of the new order. It is, in short, the mania for reconstruction that is chiefly responsible for the destruction which so horrifies those whose vision can never see anything but the world to which they have become accustomed.

In parenthesis it may be remarked that it is a tactical blunder to make one's attack upon an existing institution or idea depend upon the attractiveness of the ideal

state depicted. It enables critics to fix attention on the precise value of the proposed remedy instead of discussing whether the suggested reform is necessary. The attacker is thus placed in the position of the defender and the point at issue obscured. This is, that a certain institution or idea has outgrown its usefulness and its removal is necessary to healthy growth. And it may well be that its removal is all that is required to enable the social organism to function naturally and healthily. The outworn institution is often the grit in the machine that prevents it running smoothly.

This by the way. The fact remains that some of our best teachers have shown themselves apt to stumble in the matter. Without belief in religion they have too often assumed that its removal would leave a serious gap in life, and so would necessitate the creation of a number of substitutes to "take the place of religion." Thus, no less profound a thinker than Herbert Spencer remarks in the preface to his *Data of Ethics*:—

> Few things can happen more disastrous than the death and decay of a regulative system no longer fit, before another and a better regulative system has grown up to replace it. Most of those who reject the current creed appear to assume that the controlling agency furnished by it may safely be thrown aside, and the vacancy left unfilled by any other controlling agency.

Had Spencer first of all set himself to answer the question, "What is it that the Freethinker sets himself to remove?" or even the question, "What is the actual control exerted by religion?" one imagines that the passage above given would either never have been written or would have been differently worded.

And when a man such as Spencer permits himself to put the matter in this form one need not be surprised at the ordinary believer assuming that he has put an unanswerable question to the Freethinker when he asks what it is that we propose to put in the place of religion, with the assumption that the question is on all fours with the enquiry as to what substitutes we have for soap and coal if we destroy all stocks of these articles.

The question assumes more than any scientific Freethinker would ever grant. It takes for granted the statement that religion does at present perform some useful function in the State. And that is the very statement that is challenged. Nor does the Freethinker deny that some "controlling agency" is desirable. What he does say is that in the modern State, at least, religion exerts no control for good, that its activities make for stagnation or retrogression, that its removal will make for the healthier operation of other agencies, and that to these other and non-religious agencies belongs the credit which is at present given to religion.

Moreover, Spencer should not have needed reminding that systems of thought while they have any vital relation to life will successfully defy all attempts at eradication. The main cause of the decay of religion is not the attack made upon it by the forces of reasoned unbelief. That attack is largely the conscious expression of a revolt against a system that has long lost all touch with reality, and so has ceased to derive support from current life and thought. From this point of view the reformer is what he is because he is alive to the drift of events, susceptible to those social influences which affect all more or less, and his strength is derived from the thousand and one subtle influences that extend from generation to generation

and express themselves in what we are pleased to call the story of civilization.

But the quotation given does represent a fairly common point of view, and it is put in a form that is most favourable to religious pretensions. For it assumes that religion does really in our modern lives perform a function so useful that it would be the height of folly to remove it before we had something equally useful to take its place. But something in the place of religion is a thing that no scientific Freethinker desires. It is not a new religion, or another religion that the world needs, but the removal of religion from the control of life, and a restatement of those social qualities that have hitherto been expressed in a religious form so that their real nature will be apparent to all. Then we shall at last begin to make progress with small chance of getting a serious set-back.

This does not, of course, deny that there are many things associated with religion for the absence of which society would have cause for regret. It is part of the Freethought case that this is so. And it may also be admitted that large numbers of people honestly believe that their religious beliefs serve as motives to the expression of their better qualities. That, again, is part of the delusion we are fighting. We cannot agree that religion, as such, contains anything that is essentially useful to the race. It has maintained its power chiefly because of its association with serviceable social qualities, and it is part of the work of Freethought to distinguish between what properly belongs to religion and what has become associated with it during its long history. At present the confusion exists and the fact need cause no surprise. At best the instincts of man are deep-laid, the motives to conduct are mostly of an obscure kind, and it would be cause for surprise if, seeing how closely religion is

associated with every phase of primitive life, and how persistent are primitive modes of thinking, there were not this confusion between the actual part played by religion in life and the part assigned it by tradition.

At any rate, it is idle to argue as though human conduct was governed by a single idea—that of religion. At the most religious beliefs represent no more than a part of the vast mass of influences that determine human effort. And when we see how largely religious beliefs are dependent upon constant stimulation and protection for their existence, it seems extremely unlikely that they can hold a very vital relation to life. The impotency of religion in matters of conduct is, too, decisively shown in the fact that it is quite impossible to arrange men and women in a scale of values that shall correspond with the kind or the fervency of their religious beliefs. A religious person may be a useful member of society or he may be a quite useless one. A profound religious conviction may be accompanied by the loftiest of ideals or by the meanest of aims. The unbeliever may be, and often is, a better man than the believer. No business man would ever think of making a man's religion the condition of taking one into his service, or if he did the general opinion would be that it indicated bigotry and not shrewdness. We find it quite impossible to determine the nature of religious belief by watching the way people behave. In no stage of social life does religion provide us with anything in the nature of a differentiating factor.

It was argued by the late Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, himself a Freethinker, that as men have for a long time been in the habit of associating moral feelings with the belief in God, a severance of the two may entail moral disaster. It is, of course, hard to say what may not happen in certain cases, but it is quite

certain that such a consequence could not follow on any general scale. One has only to bring a statement of this kind down from the region of mere theory to that of definite fact to see how idle the fear is. If, instead of asserting in a vague way that the moral life is in some way bound up with religious beliefs we ask what moral action or moral disposition is so connected, we realize the absurdity of the statement. Professor Leuba well says:—

> Our alleged essential dependence upon transcendental beliefs is belied by the most common experiences of daily life. Who does not feel the absurdity of the opinion that the lavish care for a sick child by a mother is given because of a belief in God and immortality? Are love of father and mother on the part of children, affection and serviceableness between brothers and sisters, straightforwardness and truthfulness between business men essentially dependent upon these beliefs? What sort of person would be the father who would announce divine punishment or reward in order to obtain the love and respect of his children? And if there are business men preserved from unrighteousness by the fear of future punishment, they are far more numerous who are deterred by the threat of human law. Most of them would take their chances with heaven a hundred times before they would once with society, or perchance with the imperative voice of humanity heard in the conscience (*The Belief in God and Immortality*, p. 323).

And in whatever degree the fear may be justified in special cases, it applies to any attempt whatever that may be made to disturb existing conventions. Luther complained that some of his own converts were behaving worse as Protestants than they behaved as Catholics, and even in the New Testament we have

the same unfavourable comparison made of many of Christ's followers when compared with the Pagans around them. A transference of allegiance may easily result in certain ill-balanced minds kicking over the traces, but in the long run, and with the mass, the deeper social needs are paramount. There was the same fear expressed concerning man's political and social duties when the relations of Church and State were first challenged. Yet the connection between the two has been quite severed in some countries, and very much weakened in many more, without society in the least suffering from the change. On the contrary, one may say that man's duties towards the State have been more intelligently perceived and more efficiently discharged in proportion as those religious considerations that once ruled have been set on one side.

The reply of the Freethinker to the question of "What is to follow religion?" may, therefore, easily be seen. In effect it is, "Nothing at all." In any study of social evolution the properly equipped student commences his task with the full conviction that whatever the future may be like its germs are already with us. If nature does not " abhor a vacuum " it has at least an intense dislike to absolute beginnings. The future will be an elaboration of the present as the present is an elaboration of the past. For good or evil that principle remains unimpeachable.

The essential question is not, What is to follow religion? but rather what will the disappearance of religion affect that is of real value to the world. The moment the question is raised in this unambiguous manner the answer suggests itself. For assume that by some strange and unexpected happening there set in a raging epidemic of common sense. Assume that as a consequence of this the world was to awake with its mind completely cleared of all belief in religion.

What would be the effect of the transformation? It is quite clear that it would not affect any of the fundamental processes of life. The tragi-comedy of life would still be performed, it would run through the same number of acts, and it would end in the same happy or unhappy manner. Human beings would still get born, they would grow up, they would fall in love, they would marry, they would beget their kind, and they would in turn pass away to make room for another generation. Birth and death, with all their accompanying feelings, would remain. Human society would continue, all the glories of art, the greatness of science, all the marvels and wonders of the universe would be there whether we believed in a God or not. The only difference would be that we should no longer associate these things with the existence of a God. And in that respect we should be following the same course of development that has been followed in many other departments of life. We do not nowadays associate the existence of spirits with a good or a bad harvest, the anger of God with an epidemic, or the good-will of deity with a spell of fine weather. Yet in each case there was once the same assumed association between these things, and the same fears of what would happen if that association was discarded. We are only carrying the process a step further; all that is required is a little courage to take the step. In short, there is not a single useful or worthy quality, intellectual or moral, that can possibly suffer from the disappearance of religion.

On this point we may again quote from Professor Leuba: —

> The heroism of religious martyrs is often flaunted as marvellous instances of the unique sustaining strength derived from the belief in a personal God

> and the anticipation of heaven. And yet for every martyr of this sort there has been one or more heroes who has risked his life for a noble cause, without the comfort which transcendental beliefs may bring. The very present offers almost countless instances of martyrs to the cause of humanity, who are strangers to the idea of God and immortality. How many men and women in the past decade gladly offered and not infrequently lost their lives in the cause of freedom, or justice, or science? In the monstrous war we are now witnessing, is there a less heroic defence of home and nation, and less conscious self-renunciation among the non-believers than among the professed Christians? Have modern nations shown a more intense or a purer patriotism than ancient Greece and Rome, where men did not pretend to derive inspiration for their deeds of devotion in the thoughts of their gods.....The fruitful deeds of heroism are at bottom inspired not by the thought of God or a future life, but by innate tendencies or promptings that have reference to humanity. Self sacrifice, generosity, is rooted in nothing less superficial and accidental than social instincts older than the human race, for they are already present in a rudimentary form in the higher animals.

These are quite familiar statements to all Freethinkers, but to a great many Christians they may come with all the force of a new revelation.

In the earlier pages of this work I have given what I conceive solid reasons for believing that every one of the social and individual virtues is born of human intercourse and can never be seriously deranged for any length of time, so long as human society endures. The scale of values may well undergo a change with the decay of religion, but that is something which is taking place all the time, provided society is not in a state of absolute stagnation. There is not any change

that takes place in society that does not affect our view of the relative value of particular qualities. The value we place upon personal loyalty to a king is not what it once was. At one stage a man is ready to place the whole of his fortune at the disposal of a monarch merely because he happens to be his "anointed" king. To-day, the man who had no better reason for doing that would be looked upon as an idiot. Unquestioning obedience to established authority, which once played so high a part in the education of children, is now ranked very low by all who understand what genuine education means. From generation to generation we go on revising our estimate of the value of particular qualities, and the world is the better for the revision. And that is what we may assume will occur with the decay of religious belief. We shall place a higher value upon certain qualities than we do at present and a lower value upon others. But there will be no discarding the old qualities and creation of new ones. Human nature will be the same then as now, as it has been for thousands of years. The nature of human qualities will be more directly conceived and more intelligently applied, and that will be an undesirable development only for those who live by exploiting the ignorance and the folly of mankind.

Thus, if one may venture upon a prophecy with regard to the non-religious society of the future it may be said with confidence that what are known as the ascetic qualities are not likely to increase in value. The cant of Christianity has always placed an excessive value upon what is called self-sacrifice. But there is no value in self-sacrifice, as such. At best it is only of value in exceptional circumstances, as an end it is worse than useless, and it may easily degenerate from a virtue to a vice. It assumed high rank with Christian teachers for various reasons. First, it was

an expression of that asceticism which lies at the root of Christianity, second, because Christianity pictured this world as no more than a preparation for another, and taught that the deprivations and sufferings of the present life would be placed to a credit account in the next one, and third, because it helped men and women to tolerate injustice in this world and so helped the political game that governments and the Christian Church have together played. A really enlightened society would rank comparatively low the virtue of asceticism. Its principle would be not self-sacrifice but self-development.

What must result from this is an enlargement of our conception of justice and also of social reform. Both of these things occupy a very low place in the Christian scale of virtues. Social reform it has never bothered seriously about, and in its earlier years simply ignored. A people who were looking for the end of the world, whose teaching was that it was for man's spiritual good to suffer, and who looked for all help to supernatural intervention, could never have had seriously in their minds what we understand by social reform. And so with the conception of Justice. There is much of this in pre-Christian literature, and its entrance into the life and thought of modern Europe can be traced directly back to Greek and Roman sources. But the work of the Christian, while it may have been to heal wounds, was not to prevent their infliction. It was to minister to poverty, not to remove those conditions that made poverty inevitable.

A Spanish writer has put this point so well that I cannot do better than quote him. He says:—

> The notion of justice is as entirely foreign to the spirit of Christianity as is that of intellectual honesty. It lies wholly outside the field of its ethical vision.

Christianity—I am not referring to interpretations disclaimed as corruptions or applications which may be set down to frailty and error, but to the most idealized conceptions of its substance and the most exalted manifestations of its spirit—Christianity has offered consolation and comfort to men who suffered under injustice, but of that injustice itself it has remained absolutely incognizant. It has called upon the weary and heavy laden, upon the suffering and the afflicted, it has proclaimed to them the law of love, the duty of mercy and forgiveness, the Fatherhood of God; but in that torment of religious and ethical emotion which has impressed men as the summit of the sublime, and been held to transcend all other ethical ideals, common justice, common honesty have no place. The ideal Christian is seen in the saint who is seen descending like an angel from heaven amid the welter of human misery, among the victims of ruthless oppression and injustice.....but the cause of that misery lies wholly outside the range of his consciousness; no glimmer of right or wrong enters into his view of it. It is the established order of things, the divinely appointed government of the world, the trial laid upon sinners by divine ordinance. St. Vincent de Paul visits the hell of the French galleys; he proclaims the message of love and calls sinners to repentance; but to the iniquity which creates and maintains that hell he remains absolutely indifferent. He is appointed Grand Almoner to his Most Christian Majesty. The world might groan in misery under the despotism of oppressors, men's lives and men's minds might be enslaved, crushed and blighted; the spirit of Christianity would go forth and *comfort* them, but it would never occur to it to redress a single one of those wrongs. It has remained unconscious of them. To those wrongs, to men's right to be delivered from them, it was by nature completely blind. In respect to justice, to right and wrong, the spirit of Christianity is not so much immoral as amoral. The notion was as alien to it as the notion of truth. In-

> cluded in its code was, it might be controversially alleged, an old formula, "the golden rule," a commonplace of most literature, which was popular in the East from China to Asia Minor; but that isolated precept was never interpreted in the sense of justice. It meant forgiveness, forbearing, kindness, but never mere justice, common equity; those virtues were far too unemotional in aspect to appeal to the religious enthusiast. The renunciation of life and all its vanities, the casting overboard of all sordid cares for its maintenance, the suppression of desire, prodigal almsgiving, the consecration of a life, the value of which had disappeared in his eyes, to charity and love, non-resistance, passive obedience, the turning of the other cheek to an enemy, the whole riot of these hyperbolic ethical emotions could fire the Christian consciousness, while it remained utterly unmoved by every form of wrong, iniquity and injustice (Dr. Falta de Gracia. Cited by Dr. R. Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*, pp. 334-5.)

That, we may assume, will be one of the most striking consequences of the displacement of Christianity in the social economy. There will be less time wasted on what is called philanthropic work—which is often the most harmful of all social labours—and more attention to the removal of those conditions that have made the display of philanthropy necessary. There will not be less feeling for the distressed or the unfortunate, but it will be emotion under the guidance of the intellect, and the dominant feeling will be that of indignation against the conditions that make human suffering and degradation inevitable, rather than a mere gratification of purely egoistic feeling which leaves the source of the evil untouched.

That will mean a rise in the scale of values of what one may call the intellectual virtues—the duty of truthseeking and truth speaking. Hitherto the type

of character held up for admiration by Christianity has been that of the blind believer who allowed nothing to stand in the way of his belief, who required no proofs of its truth and allowed no disproofs to enter his mind. A society in which religion does not hold a controlling place is not likely to place a very high value upon such precepts as "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed," or "Though he slay me yet will I trust him." But a very high value will be placed upon the duty of investigation and the right of criticism. And one cannot easily over-estimate the consequences of a generation or two brought up in an atmosphere where such teachings obtain. It would mean a receptiveness to new ideas, a readiness to overhaul old institutions, a toleration of criticism such as would rapidly transform the whole mental atmosphere and with it enormously accentuate the capacity for, and the rapidity of, social progress.

There is also to be borne in mind the effect of the liberation of the enormous amount of energy at present expended in the service of religion. Stupid religious controversialists often assume that it is part of the Freethinker's case that religion enlists in its service bad men, and much time is spent in proving that religious people are mostly worthy ones. That could hardly be otherwise in a society where the overwhelming majority of men and women profess a religion of some sort. But that is, indeed, not the Freethinker's case at all, and if the badness of some religious people is cited it is only in answer to the foolish argument that religionists are better than others. The real complaint against religion is of a different kind altogether. Just as the worst thing that one can say about a clergyman intellectually is, not that he does not believe in what he preaches, but that he does, so the most serious indictment of current religion is not that it enlists in its

service bad characters, but that it dissipates the energy of good men and women in a perfectly useless manner. The dissipation of Christian belief means the liberating of a store of energy for service that is at present being expended on ends that are without the least social value. A world without religion would thus be a world in which the sole ends of endeavour would be those of human betterment or human enlightenment, and probably in the end the two are one. For there is no real betterment without enlightenment, even though there may come for a time enlightenment without betterment. It would leave the world with all the means of intellectual and æsthetic and social enjoyment that exist now, and one may reasonably hope that it will lead to their cultivation and diffusion over the whole of society.

Printed and Published by
THE PIONEER PRESS
(G. W. FOOTE & CO., LTD.),
61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, Limited.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

THE Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrace fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings. The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re* Bowman and Others *v.* the Secular Society, Limited, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators :—

> I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £—— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

National Secular Society.

President:
CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:
MISS E. M. VANCE.
62 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

Principles and Objects.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty, and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

All applications for Membership to be made to the Secretary as above.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

THEISM OR ATHEISM? The Great Alternative. Bound in Full Cloth, Gilt Lettered. Price 5s., postage 3d.

CONTENTS: PART I.—AN EXAMINATION OF THEISM.—Chapter I.—What is God? Chapter II.—The Origin of the Idea of God. Chapter III.—Have we a Religious Sense? Chapter IV.—The Argument from Existence. Chapter V.—The Argument from Causation. Chapter VI.—The Argument from Design. Chapter VII.—The Disharmonies of Nature. Chapter VIII.—God and Evolution. Chapter IX.—The Problem of Pain. PART II.—SUBSTITUTES FOR ATHEISM.—Chapter X.—A Question of Prejudice. Chapter XI.—What is Atheism? Chapter XII.—Spencer and the Unknowable. Chapter XIII.—Agnosticism. Chapter XIV.—Atheism and Morals. Chapter XV.—Atheism Inevitable.

RELIGION AND SEX. Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development. Price 6s., postage 9d.

A Systematic and Comprehensive Survey of the relations between the sexual instinct and morbid and abnormal mental states and the sense of religious exaltation and illumination. The ground covered ranges from the primitive culture stage to present-day revivalism and mysticism. It is a work that should be in the hands of all interested in Sociology, Religion or Psychology.

CREED AND CHARACTER. The Influence of Religion on Racial Life. Price 7d., postage 1½d.

CONTENTS: Chapter I.—Religion and Race Survival. Chapter II.—Christianity and Social Life. Chapter III.—The Case of the Jew. Chapter IV.—A Lesson from Spain.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN *(Continued.)*

DETERMINISM OR FREE-WILL? In Paper Cover, 1s. 9d., postage 2d. Half-Cloth, 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

CONTENTS: Chapter I.—The Question Stated. Chapter II.—"Freedom" and "Will." Chapter III.—Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice. Chapter IV.—Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism. Chapter V.—Professor James on the "Dilemma of Determinism." Chapter VI.—The Nature and Implication of Responsibility. Chapter VII.—Determinism and Character. Chapter VIII.—A Problem in Determinism. Chapter IX.—Environment.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY. With a Chapter on the Relation of Christianity to the Labour Movement. Fully Documented with Two Plates and Portrait. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

CONTENTS: Chapter I.—Slavery and the Bible. Chapter II.—Paganism and Slavery. Chapter III.—Slavery in the Christian Ages. Chapter IV.—The English Slave Trade. Chapter V.—American Slavery. Chapter VI.—Christianity and Labour. Chapter VII.—Black and White.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY. The Subjection and Exploitation of a Sex. An Anthropological and Historical Inquiry. Fully Documented. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

CONTENTS: Chapter I.—Christianity and Morality. Chapter II.—Woman and Primitive Religious Beliefs. Chapter III.—Woman in Pre-Christian Civilization. Chapter IV.—Woman and the Bible. Chapter V.—Woman Under Christianity. Chapter VI.—Christianity and the Home. Chapter VII.—Madonna-Worship and Chivalry. Chapter VIII.—Religion and Woman.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN *(Continued.)*

DOES MAN SURVIVE DEATH? Is the Belief Reasonable? Verbatim Report of a Discussion between Horace Leaf and Chapman Cohen. Price 7d., postage 1d.

DEITY AND DESIGN. Price 1d., postage ½d.

THE PARSON AND THE ATHEIST. A Friendly Discussion on Religion and Life between Rev. the Hon Edward Lyttelton, D.D., and Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

GOD AND MAN. An Essay in Common Sense and Natural Morality. Price 3d., postage 1d.

WAR AND CIVILIZATION. Price 1d., postage ½d.

SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES. Price 3d., postage 3d.

RELIGION AND THE CHILD. A Plea for Fair Play to the Child. Price 1d., postage ½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

MODERN MATERIALISM. A Candid Examination. By WALTER MANN. Paper Cover, 2s.; Cloth 3s. 6d., postage 2d.

CONTENTS: Chapter I.—Modern Materialism. Chapter II.—Darwinian Evolution. Chapter III.—Auguste Comte and Positivism. Chapter IV.—Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy. Chapter V.—The Contribution of Kant. Chapter VI.—Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford open the Campaign. Chapter VII.—Buechner's "Force and Matter." Chapter VIII.—Atoms and the Ether. Chapter IX.—The Origin of Life. Chapter X.—Atheism and Agnosticism. Chapter XI.—The French Revolution and the Great War. Chapter XII.—The Advance of Materialism.

A careful and exhaustive examination of the meaning of Materialism and its present standing, together with its bearing on various aspects of life. A much needed work.

GOD-EATING. A Study in Christianity and Cannibalism. By J. T. LLOYD. In Coloured Wrapper. Price 6d., postage 1½d.

THE RUINS. A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires. To which is added THE LAW OF NATURE. By C. F. VOLNEY. A New Edition, being a Revised Translation with Introduction by GEORGE UNDERWOOD, Portrait, Astronomical Charts, and Artistic Cover Design by H. CUTNER. Price 5s., postage 3d.

THE LIFE-WORSHIP OF RICHARD JEFFERIES. With Fine Portrait of Jefferies. By ARTHUR F. THORN. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians. By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL. New Edition. Cloth Bound. Price 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

CONTENTS: Part I.—Bible Contradictions. Part II.—Bible Absurdities. Part III.—Bible Atrocities. Part IV.—Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, Obscenities, Broken Promises, and Unfulfilled Prophecies.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

JESUS CHRIST: Man, God, or Myth? With a Chapter on "Was Jesus a Socialist?" By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. Paper Cover, 2s., postage 2d.; Cloth, 3s. 6d., postage 3d.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MYTHICAL CHRIST. By GERALD MASSEY. A Demonstration of the Egyptian Origin of the Christian Myth. Should be in the hands of every Freethinker. With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 6d., postage 1½d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. By G. W. FOOTE. Price 2d., postage ½d.

HERESY IN ART. The Religious Opinions of Famous Artists and Musicians. By H. G. FARMER. Price 3d., postage ½d.

PRAYER: Its Origin, History, and Futility. By J. T. LLOYD. Price 2d., postage 1d.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. By WALTER MANN. Price 2d., postage ½d.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL. With a Chapter on Infidel Death-Beds. By WALTER MANN. Price 7d., postage 1½d.

SOCIETY AND SUPERSTITION. By ROBERT ARCH. Price 0d., postage 1d.

FREETHOUGHT AND LITERATURE. By MIMNERMUS. Price 1d., postage ½d.

THE ROBES OF PAN. And other Prose Fantasies. By A. MILLAR. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

THE MOURNER: A Play of the Imagination. By G. H. MURPHY. Price 1s., postage 1d.

MISTAKES OF MOSES. By COLONEL INGERSOLL. Price 2d., postage ½d.

IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. By COLONEL INGERSOLL. Price 2d., postage 1d.

ESSAY ON SUICIDE. By D. HUME. Price 1d., postage ½d.

A FIGHT FOR RIGHT. A Verbatim Report of the Decision in the House of Lords *in re* Bowman and others *v.* The Secular Society, Limited. With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s., postage 1½d.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL. By C. T. GORHAM. A Biographical Sketch of America's Greatest Freethought Advocate. With Four Plates. In Paper Covers, 2s., postage 2d. Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d., postage 2½d.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH. By The Right Hon. J. M. ROBERTSON. An Authoritative Life of one of the greatest Reformers of the Nineteenth Century, and the only one now obtainable. With Four Portraits. In Paper Covers, 2s., postage 2d. Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d., postage 2½d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. Being the Sepher Toldoth Jeshu, or Book of the Generation of Jesus. With an Historical Preface and Voluminous Notes. By G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER. Price 6d., postage 1d.

VOLTAIRE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY. Vol. I., 128 pp., with Fine Cover Portrait, and Preface by CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 3d., postage 1½d.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA; The Rise of Christianity on the Ruins of Ancient Civilization. By M. M. MANGASARIAN. Price 1d., postage ½d.

WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JESUS? By G. W. FOOTE. Price 1d., postage ½d.

MAN AND HIS GODS. By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. Price 2d., postage 1d.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

THE SUPERMAN; Essays in Social Idealism. By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. Price 2d., postage 1d.

THE SOCIALIST SUNDAY-SCHOOL MOVEMENT. By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. Price 2d., postage 1d.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

WHAT WILL YOU PUT IN ITS PLACE? By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 6d. per 100, postage 3d.

DYING FREETHINKERS. By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 6d. per 100, postage 3d.

THE BELIEFS OF UNBELIEVERS. By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 6d. per 100, postage 3d.

ARE CHRISTIANS INFERIOR TO FREETHINKERS? By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 6d., per 100, postage 3d.

DOES MAN DESIRE GOD? By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 6d. per 100, postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

READ

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Brilliant Articles by Capable Writers on Religion, Literature, and Life.

One of the Liveliest and Most Outspoken Journals in Great Britain.

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

Of all Newsagents, or direct from the Publishing Office,
61 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C 4.

SPECIMEN COPY POST FREE.

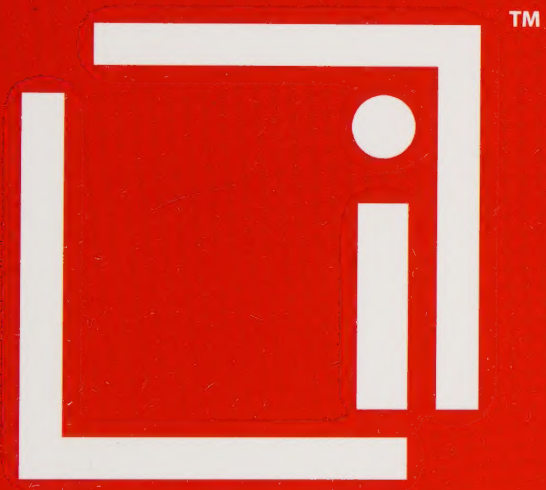
University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

ILL.
10/18/99

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 648 745 8

3 1970 01953 8526

Determinism Or Free Will



Chapman Cohen

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/isbn_9781258128814

Determinism

OR

Free-Will?

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

New Edition. Revised and Enlarged.

LONDON:
THE PIONEER PRESS,
61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.

1919.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Question Stated	9
II.	"Freedom" and "Will"	23
III.	Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice	36
IV.	Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism	50
V.	Professor James on the "Dilemma of Determinism"	63
VI.	The Nature and Implications of Responsibility	76
VII.	Determinism and Character	92
VIII.	A Problem in Determinism	101
IX.	Environment	117

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.

THE demand for a new edition of *Determinism or Free-Will* is gratifying as affording evidence of the existence of a public, apart from the class catered for by more expensive publications, interested in philosophic questions (1). It was, indeed, in the conviction that such a public existed that the book was written. Capacity, in spite of a popular impression to the contrary, has no very close relation to cash, nor is interest in philosophic questions indicated solely by the ability to spend a half-guinea or guinea on a work that might well have been published at three or four shillings. There exists a fairly large public of sufficient capacity and education intelligently to discuss the deeper aspects of life, but which has neither time nor patience to give to the study of bulky works that so often leave a subject more obscure at the end than it was at the beginning.

Nor does there appear any adequate reason why it should be otherwise. A sane philosophy must base itself on the common things of life, and must

(1) When the Mss. of this work was submitted to a well-known firm of publishers, the reply came in the form of an offer to publish the work provided it could be expanded so as to admit of its publication at 7/6. It would have been quite easy to have done this; the difficulty is to compress, and the less a subject is understood the easier it is to write at length on it. But the offer, though financially tempting, would have defeated the purpose for which the work was written, and so was declined.

deal with the common experience of all men. The man who cannot find material for philosophic study by reflecting on those which are near at hand is not likely to achieve success by travelling all over the globe. He will only succeed in presenting to his readers a more elaborately acquired and a more expensively gained confusion. Nor is there any reason why philosophy should be discussed only in the jargon of the schools, except to keep it, like the religious mysteries, the property of the initiated few. We all talk philosophy, as we all talk prose, and doubtless many are as surprised as was M. Jourdain, when the fact is pointed out to them.

So whatever merit this little work has is chiefly due to the avoidance, so far as possible, of a stereotyped phraseology, and to the elimination of irrelevant matter that has gathered round the subject. The present writer has long had the conviction that the great need in the discussion of ethical and psychological questions is their restatement in the simplest possible terms. The most difficult thing that faces the newcomer to these questions is to find out what they are really all about. Writer follows writer, each apparently more concerned to discuss what others have said than to deal with a straightforward discussion of the subject itself. Imposing as this method may be, it is fatal to enlightenment. For the longer the discussion continues the farther away from the original question it seems to get. One has heard of "The Religion of Philosophy," and its acquisition of obscurity in thought and prolixity in language seems to have gone some distance towards earning the title.

PREFACE.

Being neither anxious to parade the extent of my reading, nor greatly overawed by the large number of eminent men who have written on the subject, I decided that what was needed was a plain statement of the problem itself. My concern, therefore, has been to keep out all that has not a direct bearing on the essential question, and only to deal with other writers so far as a discussion of what they say may help to make plain the point at issue. If the result does not carry conviction it at least makes clear the ground of disagreement. And that is certainly something gained.

Moreover, there is a real need for a clearing away of all the verbal lumber that has been allowed to gather round subjects concerning which intelligent men and women will think even though they may be unable to reach reliable or satisfactory conclusions. And I have good grounds for believing that so far this little work has achieved the purpose for which it was written. If I may say it without being accused of conceit, it has made the subject clear to many who before found it incomprehensible. And, really, philosophy would not be so very obscure, if it were not for the philosophers. We may not always be able to find answers to our questions, but we ought always to understand what the questions are about. That it is not always the case is largely due to those who mistake obscurity for profundity, and in their haste to rise from the ground lose altogether their touch with the earth.

C. C.

DETERMINISM OR FREE-WILL?

I.

THE QUESTION STATED.

AT the tail end of a lengthy series of writers, from Augustine to Martineau, and from Spinoza to William James, one might well be excused the assumption that nothing new remains to be said on so well-worn a topic as that of Free-Will. Against this, however, lies the feeling that in the case of any subject which continuously absorbs attention some service to the cause of truth is rendered by a re-statement of the problem in contemporary language, with such modifications in terminology as may be necessary, and with such illustrations from current positive knowledge as may serve to make the issue clear to a new generation. In the course of time new words are created, while old ones change their meanings and implications. This results not only in the terminology of a few generations back taking on the character of a dead language to the average contemporary reader, but may occasion the not unusual spectacle of disputants using words with such widely different meanings that even a clear comprehension of the question at issue becomes impossible.

So much may be assumed without directly controverting or endorsing Professor Paulsen's opinion that the "Free-Will problem is one which arose under certain conditions and has disappeared with the disappearance of those conditions;" or the opposite opinion of Professor William James that there is no other subject on which an inventive genius has a better chance of breaking new ground. If mankind— even educated mankind—were composed of individuals whose brains functioned with the accuracy of the most approved text-books of logic, Professor Paulsen's opinion would be self-evidently true. Granting that the conditions which gave rise to the belief in Free-Will have disappeared, the belief itself should have disappeared likewise. Professor Paulsen's own case proves that he is either wrong in thinking that these conditions have disappeared, or in assuming that, this being the case, the belief has also died out.

The truth is that beliefs do not always, or even usually, die with the conditions that gave them birth. Society always has on hand a plentiful stock of beliefs that are, like so many intellectual vagrants, without visible means of support. Human history would not present the clash and conflict of opinion it does were it otherwise. Indeed, if a belief is in possession its ejection is the most difficult of all operations. Possession is here not merely nine points of the law, it is often all the law that is acknowledged. Beliefs once established acquire an independent vitality of their own, and may defy all destructive efforts for generations. One may, therefore, agree with the first half of Professor

Paulsen's statement without endorsing the concluding portion. The problem has not, so far as the generality of civilized mankind is concerned, disappeared. The originating conditions have gone, but the belief remains, and its real nature and value can only be rightly estimated by a mental reconstruction of the conditions that gave it birth. As Spencer has reminded us, the pedigree of a belief is as important as is the pedigree of a horse. We cannot be really certain whether a belief is with us because of its social value, or because of sheer unreasoning conservatism, until we know something of its history. In any case we understand better both it and the human nature that gives it hospitality by knowing its ancestry. And of this truth no subject could better offer an illustration than the one under discussion.

Reserving this point for a moment, let us ask, "What is the essential issue between the believers in Free-Will and the upholders of the doctrine of Determinism?" One may put the Deterministic position in a few words. Essentially it is a thorough-going application of the principle of causation to human nature. What Copernicus and Kepler did for the world of astronomy, Determinism aims at doing for the world of psychological phenomena. Human nature, it asserts, is part and parcel of nature as a whole, and bears to it the same relation that a part does to the whole. When the Determinist refers to the "Order of Nature" he includes all, and asserts that an accurate analysis of human nature will be found to exemplify the same principle of causation that is seen to obtain elsewhere. True,

mental phenomena have laws of their own, as chemistry and biology have their own peculiar laws, but these are additional, not contradictory to other natural laws. Any exception to this is apparent, not real. Man's nature, physical, biological, psychological, and sociological, is to be studied as we study other natural phenomena, and the closer our study the clearer the recognition that its manifestations are dependent upon processes with which no one dreams of associating the conception of "freedom." Determinism asserts that if we knew the quality and inclination of all the forces bearing upon human nature, in the same way that we know the forces determining the motions of a planet, then the forecasting of conduct would become a mere problem in moral mathematics. That we cannot do this, nor may ever be able to do it, is due to the enormous and ever-changing complexity of the forces that determine conduct. But this ought not to blind us to the general truth of the principle involved. To some extent we do forecast human conduct; that we cannot always do so, or cannot do so completely, only proves weakness or ignorance. The Determinist claims, therefore, that his view of human nature is thoroughly scientific, and that he is only applying here principles that have borne such excellent fruit elsewhere; and, finally, that unless this view of human nature be accepted the scientific cultivation of character becomes an impossibility.

So far the Determinist. The believer in Free-Will —for the future it will be briefer and more convenient to use the term "Volitionist" or "Indeterminist" —does not on his part deny the influence on the

human organism of those forces on which the Determinist lays stress. What he denies is that any of them singly, or all of them collectively, can ever furnish an adequate and exhaustive account of human action. He affirms that after analysis has done its utmost there remains an unexplained residuum beyond the reach of the instruments or the methods of positive science. He denies that conduct—even theoretically—admits of explanation and prediction in the same way that explanation and prediction apply to natural phenomena as a whole. It is admitted that circumstances may influence conduct, but only in the way that a cheque for five pounds enables one to become possessed of a certain quantity of bullion—provided the cheque is honoured by the bank. So the "Will" may honour or respond to certain circumstances or it may not. In other words, the deterministic influence of circumstances is contingent, not necessary. Circumstances determine conduct only when a "free" volition assents to their operation. So against the proposition that conduct is ultimately the conditioned expression of one aspect of the cosmic order, there is the counter-proposition that intentional action is the unconditioned expression of absolutely free beings, and is what it is because of the selective action of an undetermined will.

Further, against all deterministic analysis the Volitionist stubbornly opposes the testimony of consciousness, and the necessity for the belief in Free-Will as a moral postulate. Thus, even when the deterministic analysis of an action—from its source in some external stimuli, to the final neural discharge

that secures its performance is complete, it is still urged that no possible analysis can override man's conviction of "freedom." The existence of this conviction is, of course, indisputable, and it forms the bed-rock of all forms of anti-determinism. But the scientific or logical value of a conviction, as such, is surely open to question. Equally strong convictions were once held concerning the flatness of the earth's surface, the existence of witches, and a hundred and one other matters. Besides, a belief or a conviction is not a basal fact in human nature, it is the last stage of a process, and can therefore prove nothing save the fact of its own existence. Human nature at any stage of its existence is an evolution from past human nature, and many prevalent beliefs are as reminiscent in their character as our rudimentary tails are reminiscent of a simian ancestry. I hope later to make it clear that the much talked of testimony of consciousness is quite irrelevant to the question at issue; and also that the assumed necessity for the conception of "freedom" as a moral postulate is really due to a misconception of both the nature of morality and of voluntary action.

Ultimately the question, as already indicated, resolves itself into one of how far we are justified in applying the principle of causation. The Determinist denies any limit to its theoretical application. The Volitionist insists on placing man in a distinct and unique category. But this conception of causation is in itself of the nature of a growth, and a study of its development may well throw light on the present question.

A conception of causation in some form or other could hardly have been altogether absent from the most primitive races of mankind. Some experiences are so uniform, so persistent, and so universal that they would inevitably be connected in terms of cause and effect. Nevertheless, the primitive mind was so dominated by volitional conception of nature that a sense of necessary connection between events could only have been of a weak character. Experience may have shown that certain physical phenomena succeeded each other in a certain order, but the belief that these phenomena embodied the action of supernormal conscious forces would break in upon that sense of inevitability which is the very essence of scientific causation. Modern thought fixes its attention upon a given series of events and declines to go further. With us the order is inevitable. With primitive man the order, even when perceived, is conditional upon the non-interference of assumed supernormal intelligences. Each phenomenon, or each group of phenomena, thus possesses to the primitive mind precisely that quality of "freedom" which is now claimed for the human will.

How difficult is the task of establishing causal connections between physical phenomena the whole history of science bears witness. To establish causal connections between external conditions and subjective states, where the forces are more numerous and immensely more complex in their combinations, is a task of infinitely greater difficulty. Amongst savages it would never be attempted. Feelings arise without any traceable connection with surrounding conditions, nor does a recurrence of the same exter-

nal circumstances produce exactly the same result. A circumstance that produces anger one day may give rise to laughter on another occasion. Something that produces a striking effect on one person leaves another quite unaffected. Numerous feelings arise in consciousness that have all the superficial signs of being self-generated. The phenomena are too diverse in character, and the connections too complex and obscure, for uninstructed man to reach a deterministic conclusion. The conclusion is inevitable ; man himself is the absolute cause of his own actions; he is veritably master of his own fate, subject only to the malign and magical influence of other extra-human personalities.

Primitive thinking about man is thus quite in line with primitive thinking about other things. In a way man's earliest philosophy of things is more coherent and more rigorously logical than that of modern times. The same principle is applied all round. All force is conceived as vital force; "souls" or "wills" govern all. The division between animate and inanimate things is of the vaguest possible character ; that between man and animals can hardly be said to exist. Only very gradually do the distinctions between animate and inanimate, voluntary and involuntary actions, which are taken for granted by the modern mind, arise. And it is easy to conceive that in the growth of these distinctions, modes of thinking characteristic of primitive man, would linger longest in the always obscure field of psychology. Broadly, however, the growth of knowledge has consisted, as Huxley pointed out, in the substitution of a mechanical for

a volitional interpretation of things. In one department after another purposeful action yields to inevitable causation. In physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy, and kindred sciences this process is now complete. The volitional interpretation still betrays a feeble vitality in biology ; but even here the signs of an early demise are unmistakable. Its last stronghold is in psychology, and this because it is at once the newest of the sciences to be placed upon a positive basis, and also the most obscure in its ramifications. Yet there can be no reasonable doubt that the same principle which has been found to hold good in other directions will sooner or later be shown to obtain here also. Science is by its very nature progressive ; and its progress is manifested by the degree to which phenomena hitherto unrelated are brought under contantly enlarging and more comprehensive generalisations. Men were once satisfied to explain the "wetness" of water as due to a spirit of "aquosity," the movement of the blood as due to a "certain spirit" dwelling in the veins and arteries. These were not statements of knowledge, but verbose confessions of ignorance. To this same class of belief belongs the "Free-Will" of the anti-determinist. It is the living representative of that immense family of souls and spirits with which early animistic thought peopled the universe. The surviving member of a once numerous family, it carries with it the promise of the same fate that has already overtaken its predecessors.

The origin of the belief in free-will once understood, the reasons for its perpetuation are not difficult to discover. First comes the obscurity of the

processes underlying human action. This alone would secure a certain vitality for a belief that has always made the impossibility of explaining the origin, sequence, and relation of mental states its principal defence. Beyond offering as evidence the questionable affirmation of consciousness volitionists have been unanimous in resting their case upon their adversary's want of knowledge. And it is further characteristic that while holding to a theory on behalf of which not a single shred of positive evidence has ever been produced, they yet demand the most rigorous and the most complete demonstration of determinism before they will accept it as true; this despite the presumptive evidence in its favour arising from the fact of its harmony with our knowledge in other directions.

Secondly, the human mind does not at any time commence its philosophic speculations *de novo*. It necessarily builds upon the materials accumulated by previous generations; and usually retains the form in which previous thinking has been cast, even when the contents undergo marked modifications. Thus the ghost-soul of the savage, a veritable material copy of the body, by centuries of philosophizing gets refined into the distinct "spiritual" substance of the metaphysician. And this, not because the notion of a "soul" was derived from current knowledge or thinking, but because it was one of the inherited forms of thought to which philosophy had to accommodate itself. The result of this pressure of the past upon contemporary thinking is that a large proportion of mental activity is in each generation devoted to reconciling past theories of things with

current knowledge. In our own time the number of volumes written to reconcile the theory of evolution with already existing religious views is a striking example of this phenomenon. And beyond the philosophic few there lies the mass of the people with whom an established opinion of any kind takes on something of a sacred character. Unfortunately, too, many writers work with an eye to the prejudices of this class, which prejudices are in turn strengthened by the tacit support of men of ability, or at least by their not openly controverting them. It is, however, of the greatest significance that since the opening of the modern scientific period, wherever qualified thinkers have deliberately based their conclusions upon contemporary knowledge the theory of determinism has been generally upheld.

A third cause of the persistence of the belief in "Free-Will" is its association with theology. For at least four centuries, whenever the discussion of the subject has assumed an acute form, it has been due to theological requirements rather than to ethical or psychological considerations. True, many other reasons have been advanced, but these have been little more than cloaks for the theological interest. Apart from theology there does not seem any valid reason why the principle of determinism should rouse more opposition in connection with human character than it does in connection with the course of physical nature. Or if it be pointed out that the establishment of the principle of universal causation, as applied to nature at large, was not established without opposition, then the reply is that here again it was the religious interest that dictated the opposi-

tion. It was felt that the reduction of all physical phenomena to a mechanical sequence was derogatory to the majesty of God, excluded the deity from his own universe, and generally weakened the force of religious beliefs. And, as a mere matter of historic fact, the establishment of the scientific conception of nature did have, with the bulk of mankind, precisely the consequences predicted. And when in the course of events theological considerations were banished from one department of science after another, it was only natural that theologians should fight with the greater tenacity to maintain a footing in the region of human nature.

Although the subject is in origin pre-Christian, it was in connection with Christian theology that it assumed an important place in European thinking. The development of monotheism gave the problem a sharper point and a deeper meaning. The issue here was a simple one. Given the belief in God as sole creator and governor of the world, and he may conceivably be related to mankind in one of two ways. Either he induces man to carry out his will by an appeal to human reason and emotion, or he has so arranged matters that certain events will inevitably come to pass at a certain time, human effort being one of the contributory agencies to that end. The first supposition leaves man "free"—at least in his relation to deity. The second leads straight to the Christian doctrine of predestination. Either supposition has, from the theological point of view, its disadvantages. The first leaves man free as against God, but it limits the power of deity by creating an autonomous force that may act

contrary to the divine will. The second opens up the question of the divine wisdom and goodness, and by making God responsible for evil conflicts with the demands of the moral sense. Evil and goodness are made parts of the divine plan, and as man must fit in with the general pre-arranged scheme, personal merit and demerit disappear. These considerations explain why in the course of the Free-Will controversy official Christianity has ranged itself now on one side and now on the other. It has championed Determinism or Indeterminism as the occasion served its interest. To-day, owing to easily discoverable reasons, Christian writers are, in the main, markedly anti-deterministic.

The first clear statement of the Christian position, if we omit the Pauline teaching that we are all as clay in the hands of the potter, appears in the writings of Augustine. In opposition to the Pelagians, Augustine maintained a doctrine of absolute predestination. No room was allowed for human self-determination to anyone but the first man. Adam was created and endowed with free-will, and chose evil—a curious verification of Voltaire's definition of Free-Will as a capacity by means of which man gets himself damned. And as in Adam there were contained, potentially, all future generations, all are pre-destined to eternal damnation except such as are saved through the free gift of divine grace. This theory of Augustine's, carried to the point of asserting the damnation of infants, was modified in several respects by that great medieval Christian teacher, Thomas Aquinas, who held that while the will might be " free " from

external restraint, it was determined by our reason, but was reinstated in full force by John Calvin. He denied that the goodness or badness of man had anything whatever to do with the bestowal or withholding of grace. God dooms men either to heaven or hell, for no other reason than that he chooses to do so. Most of the leading Protestants of the early Reformation period were strongly opposed to "free-will." For instance, Zwingli asserted that God was the "author, mover, and impeller to sin." Still more emphatic was Luther. The will of man he compared to a horse, "If mounted by God it wills and wends whithersoever God may will; if mounted by Satan it wills and wends whithersoever Satan may will; neither hath it any liberty of choice to which of the riders it shall run, or which it shall choose; but the riders themselves contend for its acquisition and possession." Among the most powerful essays ever written in defence of Determinism was Jonathan Edwards's, the famous Protestant divine, "Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions respecting that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be essential to moral agency, virtue and vice, reward and punishment, praise and blame," and to which I shall have occasion to refer later. Finally, the explicit declarations of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Articles of the Church of England, that man's will,—in the absence of grace,—cannot accomplish good works, throw a curious light on the theological opponents of Determinism who denounce it as anti-Christian and immoral.

II.

"FREEDOM" AND "WILL."

To David Hume the dispute between the advocates of "Free-Will" and the advocates of "Necessity" was almost entirely a matter of words. The essence of the question, he thought, both sides were agreed on, and consequently expressed the opinion that "a few intelligible definitions would immediately have put an end to the whole controversy." That Hume was over sanguine is shown by the controversy being still with us. Yet his recommendation as to intelligible definitions, while pertinent to all controversy, is specially so with regard to such a subject as that of "Free-Will." For much of the anti-Determinist case actually rests upon giving a misleading significance to certain phrases, while applying others in a direction where they have no legitimate application. Consider, for instance, the controversial significance of such a phrase as "Liberty *versus* Necessity"—the older name for Determinism. We all love liberty, we all resent compulsion, and, as Mill pointed out, he who announces himself as a champion of Liberty has gained the sympathies of his hearers before he has commenced to argue his case. Such words play the same part that "catchy" election cries do in securing votes. Such phrases as "Power of Choice," "Sense of Responsibility," "Testimony of Consciousness,"

"Consciousness of Freedom," are all expressions that, while helpful and legitimate when used with due care and understanding, as usually employed serve only to confuse the issue and prevent comprehension.

Not that the dispute between the Volitionist and the Determinist is a merely verbal one. The controversy carries with it a significance of the deepest kind. Fundamentally the issue expresses the antagonism of two culture stages, an antagonism which finds expression in many other directions. We are in fact concerned with what Tylor well calls the deepest of all distinctions in human thought, the distinction that separates Animism from Materialism. Much as philosophic ingenuity may do in the way of inventing defences against the application of the principle of causation to human action, the deeper our analysis of the controversy, the more clearly is it seen that we are dealing with an attenuated form of that primitive animism which once characterised all human thinking. The persistence of types is a phenomenon that occurs as frequently in the world of mind as it does in the world of biology. Or just as when a country is overrun by a superior civilisation, primitive customs are found lingering in remote districts, so unscientific modes of thinking linger in relation to the more obscure mental processes in spite of the conquests of science in other directions.

It is well to bear these considerations in mind, even while admiting that a great deal of the dispute does turn upon the fitness of the language employed, and the accuracy which which it is used. And if intelligible definition may not, as Hume hoped, end

the controversy, it will at least have the merit of making the issue plain.

What is it that people have in their minds when they speak of the "Freedom of the Will"? Curiously enough, the advocates of "free-will" seldom condescend to favour us with anything so commonplace as a definition, or if they do it tells us little. We are consequently compelled to dig out the meanings of their cardinal terms from the arguments used. Now the whole of the argument for "free-will" makes the word "free" or "freedom" the equivalent to *an absence of determining conditions*; either this, or the case for "free-will" is surrendered. For if a man's decisions are in any way influenced—"influenced" is here only another word for "determined"—Determinism is admitted. I need not argue whether decisions are wholly or partly determined, the real and only question being whether they are determined at all. What is called by some a limited free-will is really only another name for unlimited nonsense.

"Freedom," as used by the Volitionist, being an equivalent for "absence of determining conditions," let us ask next what this means. Here I am brought to a dead halt. I do not know what it means. I cannot even conceive it as meaning anything at all. At any rate, I am quite certain that it is outside the region of scientific thought and nomenclature. Scientifically, atoms of matter are not *free* to move in any direction, the planets are not *free* to move in any shaped orbit, the blood is not *free* to circulate, the muscles are not *free* to contract, the brain is not *free* to function. In all these cases what takes

place is the result of all converging circumstances and conditions. Given these and the result follows. Scientifically, the thing that occurs is the only thing possible. If the word "free" is used in science, it is as a figure of speech, as when one speaks of a free gas, or of the blood not being free to circulate owing to the existence of a constricted artery. But in either case all that is meant is that a change in the nature of the conditions gives rise to a corresponding change of result. The determination of the gas or the blood to behave in a definite way is as great in any case. From the point of view of science, then, to speak of an absence of determining conditions is the most complete nonsense. All science is a search for the conditions that determine phenomena. Save as a metaphor, "freedom" has no place whatever in positive science.

Are we then to discard the use of such a word as "freedom" altogether? By no means. Properly applied, the word is intelligible and useful enough. When, for instance, we speak of a free man, a free state, a free country, or free trade, we are using the word "free" in a legitimate manner, and can give to it a precise significance. A free state is one in which the people composing it pursue their way uncoerced by other states. A free man is one who is at liberty to exert bodily action or express his opinions. We do not mean that in the first instance the people are not governed by laws, or that physical conditions are without influence on them; nor do we mean, in the second instance, that the actions and opinions of the free man are not the result of heredity, bodily structure, education,

social position, etc. The obvious meaning of "freedom" in each of these cases is an absence of external and non-essential coercion. It does not touch the question of why we act as we do, or of why we please to act in this or that manner. As Jonathan Edwards puts it: "The plain, obvious meaning of the words 'freedom' and 'liberty' is power and opportunity, or advantage that any one has to do as he pleases." Or as Hume put it more elaborately:—

> "What is meant by liberty when applied to voluntary actions? We cannot surely mean that actions have so little connection with motives, inclinations, and circumstances that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other. For these are plain and acknowledged matters of fact. By liberty, then, we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determination of the will—that is, if we choose to remain at rest we may; and if we choose to move, we also may."

The ultimate significance of "liberty" or "freedom" is thus sociological. Here it expresses a fact; in positive science it is a mere metaphor, and, as experience shows, a misleading one. Its use in philosophy dates from the time of the Greeks, and when they spoke of a free man they were borrowing an illustration from their social life. There were slaves and there were free men, and in speaking of a free man people were not so likely as they were at

a later date to be misled by a metaphor. Unfortunately, its use in philosophy has continued, while its limitations have been ignored. To ask if a man is free is an intelligible question. To ask whether actions are free from the determining associations of organization and environment admits of but one intelligible reply. Personally, I agree with Professor Bain that the term " is brought in by main force, into a phenomenon to which it is altogether incommensurable," and it would be well if it could be excluded altogether from serious discussion (1).

Now let us take that equally confusing word " will." Unfortunately, few of those who champion the freedom of the will think it worth while to trouble their readers with a clear definition of what they mean by it. The orthodox definition of the will as " a faculty of the soul " tells us nothing. It is explaining something the existence of which

(1) " The subjective sense of freedom, sometimes alleged against Determinism, has no bearing on the question whatever. The view that it has a bearing rests upon the belief that causes compel their effects, or that nature enforces obedience to its laws as governments do. These are mere anthropomorphic superstitions, due to assimilation of causes with volitions, and of natural laws with human edicts. We feel that our will is not compelled, but that only means that it is not other than we choose it to be. It is one of the demerits of the traditional theory of causality that it has created an artificial opposition between determinism and the freedom of which we are introspectively conscious." (Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 206.)

So also Wundt: " Freedom and contraint are reciprocal concepts; they are both necessarily connected with consciousness; outside of consciousness they are both imaginary concepts, which only a mythologising imagination could relate to things." (*Human and Animal Psychology*, p. 426.)

is questioned by reference to something else the existence of which is unknown. Or the definition is volunteered, "Will is the power to decide," a description which only tells us that to will is to will. Professor James tells us that "Desire, wish, will, are states of mind which every one knows, and which no definition can make plainer." This may be true of desire and wish; it certainly is not true of "will." There is no question as to "will" being a state of mind, but as to every one knowing its character, and above all possessing the knowledge enabling him to discriminate between "will" and "desire" and "wish," this is highly questionable. One may also be permitted the opinion that if advocates of "free-will" were to seriously set themselves the task of discovering what they do mean by "will," and also in what way it may be differentiated from other mental states, the number of the champions of that curious doctrine would rapidly diminish.

What is it that constitutes an act of volition, or supplies us with the fact of will? The larger part of our bodily movements do not come under the heading of volition at all. The primary bodily movements are reflex, instinctive, emotional, the action following without any interposition of consciousness. Of course, an action that is performed quite automatically at one time may be voluntarily performed at another time. I may close my eyelid deliberately, or it may be because of the approach of some foreign object. Or an action, if it be performed frequently, tends to become automatic. To come within the category of a voluntary action,

it must be performed consciously, and there is also present some consciousness of an end to be realized. Every voluntary action is thus really dependent upon memory. A newly-born child has no volitions, only reflexes. It is only when experience has supplied us with an idea of what *may* be done that we *will* it shall be done. This consideration alone is enough to shatter the case for the supposed freedom of the will.*

If we analyze any simple act of volition what has just been said will be made quite clear. I am sitting in a room and *will* to open a window; it may be to get fresh air, to look out, or for some other reason. Assume that the first is the correct reason, the room being close and "stuffy." First of all, then, I become aware of a more or less unpleasant feeling; my experience tells me this is because the air in the room needs purifying. Experience also tells me that by opening a window the desired result will be obtained. Finally, I open the window and experience a feeling of relief and satisfaction. Now had the room been without a window, and the door bolted from the outside, or had the window been too heavy for me to raise, no "volition"

*The essential issue is again confused by the language employed. If all volitional acton is action performed with the view to an end, a quite correct and completely adequate word would be "intentional"! If we were to speak of an "intentional" action instead of a voluntary one, the nature of the act would be clear, the factors of experience, memory, consciousness of an end, would be indicated, and the misleading associations of "willing" avoided. It is difficult, however, to introduce a new terminology, and so I must beg the reader, in the interests of clarity, to bear in mind that whenever "voluntary action" is referred to, it is "intentional" action that is connoted by the phrase.

would have arisen. I should still have had the desire for fresh air, but not seeing any means by which this could be obtained, I should have had no *motive* for action, and should have remained perfectly passive. In order that my desire may operate as a motive there must be not only a consciousness of a need, but also a mental representation of the means by which that need is to be gratified. I *will* to do a thing, when allied to the desire for that thing there is a conception of *how* it is to be done, of the means to be employed. Without this I have no motive, only a desire; without a consciousness of the nature of the desire, there is nothing but pure feeling. "Willing terminates with the prevalence of the idea. . . ." "Attention with effort is all that any case of volition implies." (Prof. W. James, *Princip. of Psychology*, II. 560-1.)

The stages of the process are, feeling rising into consciousness as desire, the perception of the means to realize an end which raises the desire from the statical to the dynamic stage of motive, and finally a voluntary or intentional action. Now at no stage of this process is there room for the intervention of any power or faculty not expressed in a strictly sequential process. Of course, the action I have taken as an example is an exceedingly simple one, but the more complex actions only offer greater difficulties of analysis without leading to any different result. This will be seen more clearly when we come to deal with "choice" and "deliberation." From the moment that a certain stimulus creates a desire in an organism, to the time that desire expresses itself in action, there is no gap in the chain

through which a "Free-Will" may manifest its being. The physiologist points out that at the basis of all our feelings and ideas there lie certain neural processes. The psychologist takes up the story and from the dawn of desire to action finds no break—or at least none that future knowledge may not reasonably hope to make good. Want of knowledge may at present prevent our tracing all the details of the process, but this is surely a very inadequate ground on which to affirm the existence of a power at variance with our knowledge of nature in other directions.†

Now in thus tracing the course of a voluntary action are we doing any more than observing the action of desire in consciousness? If, yes, the writer is quite unaware of the fact. If I remove all feeling, all desire, all motive, "the will" disappears. Excite feeling, generate desire, and there is the occasion for a voluntary action. Multiply the number of desires and the operation of "will" becomes evident. Thus when a writer like Professor Hyslop says, "If two motives offer different attractions to the will," the reply is that the "will" is not one thing, and motives other things, but two aspects of one fact. The "will" is not something that decides or chooses between motives; the "will" is nothing more than the name given to that motive or cluster of motives which is sufficiently strong to overcome resistance and to express itself

†Whether we work backward or forward the result is the same. Strip off from the mind all feelings, desires, all consciousness of ends and means to ends, and what there is left is not a "will" ready to throw the weight of its preference in this or that direction, but a complete blank.

in action. I emphasize the expression " overcome resistance " because without competing motives and a sense of resistance we have no clear consciousness of volition. Where only one desire is present in consciousness, or where it is of overwhelming strength, feeling is succeeded by action without any recognizable hiatus. It is the sense of conflict, the break, that is essential to creating a lively sense of volition, and also, as shall see later, to the sense of choice and deliberation. But in speaking of an action as the expression of motives, or as an expression of " will," both statements are identical so far as the fact is concerned. We have not desires, motives, and " will," there is simply a desire or desires that assume the quality of a motive by being strong enough to result in action. As Spencer has put it, " Will is no more an existence apart from the predominant feeling than a king is an existence apart from the man occupying the throne."

All that is to be found in any act of " will " is a desire accompanied by the consciousness of an end. To put the same thing in another way, we have a desire, the consciousness of an end and the means of realizing it, and, finally, action. To the physiological and psychological processes that culminate in action we give the name of motive. Properly speaking a motive that does not issue in action —or inhibition—is not a motive at all, it is a mere desire. And apart from the presence of desire, or of desires, " will " does not exist. It is a pure abstraction, valuable enough as an abstraction, but having no more real existence apart from particular motives, than " tree " is a real existence apart from

particular trees. Physiologically, says Dr. Maudesley:—

> "We cannot choose but reject *the* will. . . . As physiologists we have to deal with volition as a function of the supreme centres, following reflection, varying in quantity and quality as its cause varies, strengthened by education and exercise, enfeebled by disuse, decaying with decay of structure. . . . We have to deal with will not as a single undecomposable faculty unaffected by bodily conditions, but as a result of organic changes in the supreme centres, affected as certainly and as seriously by disorders of them as our motor faculties are by disorders of their centres."

And, says Professor Sully, referring to *the* will:—

> "Modern scientific psychology knows nothing of such an entity. As a science of phenomena and their laws, it confines itself to a consideration of the processes of volition, and wholly discards the hypothesis of a substantial will as unnecessary and unscientific."

Neither physiology nor psychology, neither a sane science nor a sound philosophy, knows anything of, or can find use for, an autonomous "will." "Will" as the final term of a discoverable series may be admitted; "will" as a self-directing force, deciding whether particular desires shall or shall not

prevail, answers to nothing conformable to our knowledge of man, and is plainly but the ghost of the wills and souls of our savage ancestors. If instead of speaking of the freedom of the will, we spoke of uncaused volitions, the position of the volitionist would be clear, and its indefensible character plain to all. But by giving the abstraction "will" a concrete existence, and by taking from sociology a word such as "freedom" and using it in a sphere in which it has no legitimate application, the issue is confused, and a scientifically absurd theory given an air of plausibility. The dispute between the Determinist and the Indeterminist is certainly not one of words only, but it is one in which the cardinal terms employed need the most careful examination if we are to clear away from the subject the verbal fog created by theologians and metaphysicians.

III.

CONSCIOUSNESS, DELIBERATION, AND CHOICE.

THE one argument used by the Indeterminist against the Deterministic position with some degree of universality is that of the testimony of consciousness. It is the one to which practically all have appealed, and which all have flattered themselves was simple in nature and convincing in character. Professor Sidgwick, although he admitted that this testimony might be illusory, yet asserted "There is but one opposing argument of real force, namely, the immediate affirmation of consciousness in the moment of deliberate action." And by the testimony of consciousness must be meant, not, of course, a consciousness of acting, but that at the moment of acting we could, *under identical conditions*, have selected and acted upon an alternative that has been rejected. I emphasize the phrase "under identical conditions," because otherwise nothing is in dispute, and because, as we shall see, this important consideration has not been always or even frequently borne in mind.

The question is, What does consciousness really tell us, and how far is its testimony valid? In some directions it must be admitted that the testimony of consciousness is absolute. In others it cannot, without verification, claim any authority whatever. When I say that I have a feeling of heat or

coldness, of pleasure or pain, there is here a direct deliverance of consciousness against which there is no appeal. But consciousness does not and cannot tell me why I feel hot or cold, or what is the cause of a pain I am experiencing. In this last case the testimony of consciousness may be distinctly misleading. As it tells us nothing of the existence of a brain, a nervous system, viscera, etc., its testimony as to the cause of pain is obviously of no value. We are conscious of states of mind, and that is all. A man seized with sudden paralysis may be conscious of his power to move a limb, only to discover by experience his impotence. In short, consciousness cannot, indeed does not, tell us the causes of our states of mind. For this information we are thrown back upon observation, experiment, and experience. We must, then, make quite sure when we interrogate consciousness, exactly what it is that consciousness says, and whether what it says is on a subject that comes within its province.

What is, then, the testimony of consciousness? When it is said that we are conscious of our ability to have selected one alternative at the time that another is chosen, I think this may be fairly met with the retort that consciousness is unable to inform us as to our actual ability to *do* anything at all. I may be quite conscious of a desire to jump a six foot fence, or lift a weight of half a ton, but whether I am actually able to do so or not, only experience can decide. What I am really conscious of is a desire to vault a given height or lift a given weight, and it is surely an inexcusable confusion to speak of a desire to do a particular thing as the

equivalent of an ability to do it. If a consciousness of desire equalled the ability to perform failure would be but little known among men.

All that consciousness really tells us is of the existence of passing states of mind. It can tell us nothing of their origin, their value, or their consequences. In the particular instance under consideration consciousness informs us of the fact of choice, and this no Determinist has ever dreamed of denying. He does assert that choice, as the Indeterminist persists in using the term, is a delusion, but otherwise, as will be shown later, he claims that it is only on deterministic lines that choice can have any meaning or ethical significance. In any voluntary action I am conscious of the possibility of choice and of having chosen, and that is really all. What is the nature of that possibility, and why I choose one thing rather than another—on these points consciousness can give us no information whatever. One might as reasonably argue that a consciousness of hunger gives us a knowledge of the process of digestion, as argue that a consciousness of choice supplies us with a knowledge of the mechanism of the process. We are conscious of the presence of several desires, we are also conscious that out of these several desires one is strong enough to rank as a motive, but it tells us absolutely nothing of the causes or conditions that have resulted in the emergence of that motive. Instead of telling us that we could have acted in opposition to the strongest motive—which is really the indeterminist position—consciousness simply reveals which desire is the most powerful. We are conscious that

other desires were present, we are also aware of the possibility that another desire than the one that actually prevailed might have been the most powerful; but when we admit this and say that we *could* have acted differently, we have really displaced the actual conditions by imaginary ones. We *might* have preferred to act differently. This is not denied. It is not questioned that we do choose, or that the same person chooses, differently or different occasions. The question really is, Why have we chosen thus or thus? And so far as consciousness is concerned we are quite in the dark as to why one choice is made rather than another, what are the conditions that give rise to our conscious desires, or why one desire is more powerful than another.

Consciousness, then, can testify only to the reality of its own states; no more. It can tell us nothing of their causes. It cannot tell us that man has a brain and nervous system, and can tell us nothing of the connection between mental states and the condition of the bodily organs. The chief factor in conduct (habit) lies outside the region of consciousness altogether. In most cases we act as we have been in the habit of acting, and our present conduct expresses the sum of our previous actions and inclinations. Every action we perform assists the formation of a habit, and with every repetition of a particular action we find its performance easier. Indeed, a very powerful criticism of the trustworthiness of consciousness is found in the fact that the determining causes of conduct lie largely in the region of the unconscious or subconscious, and of this territory consciousness can tell us no more than

a ripple on the surface of a river can tell us of its depths.

Next to the emphasis upon the testimony of consciousness the Indeterminist lays special stress upon the facts of choice and deliberation. Can we really say, it is asked, that man chooses and deliberates, or even that in any genuine sense he does anything at all, if all his actions are pre-determined by his constitution and environment? If every act of man is determined and man himself a mere stage in the process unending and unbroken, is it not idle to speak of man deliberating on alternatives and choosing that which seems to him best? We continue using words that on deterministic lines have lost all meaning. And if Determinists do not realise this, it is because the logical implications of their doctrines have never been fully explored.

Well, it entirely depends upon the sense in which one uses the cardinal terms in the discussion. If deliberation and choice when applied to mental processes are used in the same sense as when these terms are used as descriptive of the proceedings of a committee, then we can all agree that deliberation would be as great a sham as it would be if the members of a committee before meeting had determined upon their decision. But, we may note in passing, that even here, when the deliberations are genuine, the votes of each member are supposed to be decided by the reasons advanced during the discussion—that is the decision of each individual member is determined by the forces evoked during the deliberations.

The scientific method, and it may be added, the

sane and profitable method, is not to come to the study of a problem with ready-made meanings and compel the facts, under penalty of disqualification, to agree with them, but to let the facts determine what meaning is to be attached to the words used. It is mere childish petulance for the Indeterminist to say that unless certain words are used with *his* meaning they shall not be used at all, but shall be expelled our vocabulary. When gravity was conceived as a force moving downward through infinite space, the existence of people on the other side of the earth was denied as being contrary to the law of gravitation. A more correct knowledge of the phenomena did not lead people to discard gravity; the meaning of the word was revised. And really neither language nor morality is the private property of the Indeterminist, and he is, therefore, not at liberty to annihilate either for not coming up to his expectations. He must submit to such revision of his ideas, or his language, or of both, as more accurate knowledge may demand.

The question is not, then, whether Determinism destroys deliberation and choice and responsibility, but what meaning Determinism can legitimately place upon these words, and is this meaning in harmony with what we know to be true. With responsibility we will deal at length later. For the present let us see what is really involved in the fact of choice. Determinism, we are advised, must deny the reality of choice, because choice assumes alternatives, and there can be no genuine alternatives if events are determined. Let us see. If I am watching a stone rolling down a hillside, and am

in doubt as to whether it will pass to the right or to the left of a given point, I shall not recognize any resident capacity in the stone for choosing one path rather than the other. The absence of consciousness in the stone precludes such an assumption. But suppose we substitute for the stone a barefooted human being, and assume that one path is smooth while the other is liberally sprinkled with sharp pointed stones. There would then be an obvious reason for the selection of one path, and no one would hesitate to say that here was an illustration of the exercise of choice. Choice, then, is a phenomenon of consciousness, and it implies a recognition of alternatives. But a recognition of alternatives does not by any means imply that either of two are equally eligible. It is merely a consciousness of the fact that they exist, and that either might be selected were circumstances favourable to its selection. Without labouring the point we may safely say that all that is given in the fact of choice is the consciousness of a choice. There is nothing in it that tells us of the conditions of the selection, or whether it was possible for the agent to have chosen differently or not.

So far there is nothing in Determinism that is discordant with the fact of choice, indeed, it has a perfectly reasonable theory of the process. Why is there a choice or selection of things or actions? Clearly the reason must be looked for in the nature of the thing selected, or in the nature of the agent that selects, or in a combination of both factors. Either there is an organic prompting in favour of the thing selected, as when a baby takes a bottle

of milk and rejects a bottle of vinegar, or there is a recognition that the selection will enable the agent to better realize whatever end he has in view. The alternatives are there, and they are real in the only sense in which they can be real. But they are not real in the sense of their being equally eligible—which is the sense in which the Indeterminist uses the word. For that would destroy choice altogether. Unless a selection is made because certain things offer greater attractions than other things to the agent, no intelligible meaning can be attached to such a word as " Choice." We should have a mere blind explosion of energy, the direction taken no more involving choice than the stone's path down a hillside. And if the " Will " chooses between alternatives because one is more desirable than the other, its " freedom " (in the Indeterminist sense) is sacrificed, and the selection is correspondingly determined. There can be no real choice in the absence of a determinative influence exercised by one of the things chosen.

But it is urged that this line of reasoning does not explain the feeling of possibility that we have at the moment of action. I think it explains possibility as it explains choice, provided we allow facts to determine the meaning of words instead of torturing facts to suit certain forms of language. If by possibility we mean that under identical conditions, other things than those which actually occur are possible, then this may be confidently met with a flat denial. If, on the other hand, it is meant that by varying the conditions other possibilities become actualities, this is a statement that to a

Determinist is self-evident. As a matter of fact, there are only two senses in which the word " possibility " may be rightly used, and neither sense yields any evidence against Determinism.

One of these meanings is simply an expression of our own ignorance on the matter that happens to be before us. If I am asked what kind of weather we are likely to have a month hence, I should reply that it is equally possible the day may be dry or wet, bright or dull. I do not mean to imply that had I adequate knowledge it would not be as easy to predict the kind of weather on that date as it is to predict the position of Neptune. It is simply an expression of my own ignorance. But, as Spinoza pointed out, possibility narrows as knowledge grows. To complete ignorance anything is possible because the course of events is unknown. As a comprehension of natural causation develops, people speak less of what may possibly occur, and more of what will occur. Possibility here has no reference to the course of events, only to our knowledge, or want of knowledge, concerning their order. To say that it is possible for a man to do either this or that is, so far as a spectator is concerned, only to say that our knowledge concerning the man's whole nature is not extensive enough, or exact enough for us to predict what he will do. Nor is the case altered if instead of an outsider, it is the agent himself who is incapable of prediction. For all that amounts to is the assertion that the agent is ignorant of the relative strength of desires that may be aroused under a particular conjuncture of circumstances.

The second sense of " possibility " depends upon our ability to imagine conditions not actually present at the moment of action. By a trick of imagination I can picture myself acting differently, or, on looking back, I can see that I might have acted differently. But in either case I have altered in thought the conditions that actually existed at the moment of action. Generally, all it means is that with a number of conflicting desires present, I am conscious that a very slight variation in the relative strength of these desires would result in a different course of conduct. And the conditions affecting conduct are so complex and so easily varied that it is small wonder there is lacking in this instance that sense of inevitability present when one is dealing with physical processes. But the essential question is not whether a slight change of conditions would produce a different result, but whether under identical conditions two opposite courses of action are equally possible? And this is not only untrue in fact, it is unthinkable, as a formal proposition. Even the old adage, " There, but for the grace of God, go I," while recognizing a different possibility, also recognized that a variation in the factors—the elimination of the grace of God—is essential if the possibility was to become an actuality. That the sense of possibility implies more than this may be safely denied, let who will make the opposite affirmation.

This discussion of the nature and function of choice will help us to realize more clearly than would otherwise be the case the nature of deliberation. This question has always played an important part

in the Free-Will controversy, because it has stood as the very antithesis of a reflex or obviously mechanical action. Deliberation, it has been argued, does very clearly point to a determinative power exercised by the human will, and a power that cannot be explained in the same terms with which we explain other events. One anti-determinist writer remarks that "if a volition is the effect of a 'motive,' it should follow immediately upon the occurrence of the motive. But if there is deliberation between motives, they do not seem to have casual power to initiate a volition until a prior causal power directs them, and this would be the deliberating subject."

Now there are numerous cases, the majority probably, where action does follow immediately upon the presence of desire. And in such cases we are not aware of any process of deliberation, although there may be a truly intentional action. And from this single case we have a whole series of examples that will take us to the other extreme where the desires are so numerous and so conflicting that an excess of deliberation may prevent action altogether. Let us take an illustration. Sitting in my room on a fine day I am conscious of a desire for a walk. Provided no opposing feeling or desire is present I should at once rise and go out. But I may be conscious of a number of other feelings based upon various considerations. There is the fact of leaving the task on which I am engaged, and the desire to get it finished. There is the trouble of dressing, the consideration that once out I may wish I had stayed in, or that it may rain, or that I may be

needed at home: all these result in a state of indecision, and induce deliberation. Imagination is excited, ideal feelings are aroused, and eventually a choice is made. I decide on the walk. What is it, now, that has occurred? My first desire for a walk has been enforced by a representation of all the advantages that may be gained by going out, and these have proved themselves strong enough to bear down all opposition. Had any other desire gained strength, or had the conviction that it would rain been strong enough, a different motive would have emerged from this conflict of desires and ideas. No matter how we vary the circumstances, this is substantially what occurs in every case where deliberation and choice are involved. Not only is this what does occur, but it is impossible to picture clearly any other process. The only evidence we can have of the relative strength of ideas is that one triumphs over others. To say that the weaker desire triumphs is to make a statement the absurdity of which is self-evident.

This conclusion cannot be invalidated by the argument that a particular desire becomes the stronger because the "will" declares in its favour. One need only ask, by way of reply, Why does the "will" declare in favour of one desire rather than another? There is no dispute that a choice is made. Those who say that a man can choose what he likes are not making a statement that conflicts in the slightest degree with Determinism. The Determinist says as clearly as anyone that I do what I choose to do. The real question is why do I choose this rather than that? Why does the "will" pro-

nounce in favour of one desire rather than another? No one can believe that all desires are of equal strength or value to the agent. Such an assumption would be too absurd for serious argument. But if all desires are not of equal strength and value, the only conclusion left is that certain ones operate because they are, in relation to the particular organism, of greater value than others. And in that case we are simply restating Determinism. The action of the environment is conditioned by the nature of the organism. The reaction of the organism is conditioned by the character of the environment. The resultant is a compound of the two.

It is, moreover, an absurdity to speak of the "will" or the self as though this were something apart from the various phases of consciousness. In the contest of feelings and desires that calls forth deliberation *I* am equally involved in every aspect of the process. As Professor James points out, "both effort and resistance are ours, and the identification of our *self* with one of these factors is an illusion and a trick of speech." My self and my mental states are not two distinct things; they constitute myself, and if these are eliminated there is no self left to talk about.

Further, in the growth of each individual, conscious and deliberative action can be seen developing out of automatic action—the simplest and earliest type of action. Not only does deliberative action develop from reflex action, but it sinks into reflex action again. One of the commonest of experiences is that actions performed at one time slowly and after deliberation are at another time performed rapidly

and automatically. Every action contributes to the formation of a habit, and frequently repetition results in the habit becoming a personal characteristic. Deliberation and choice are not even always the mark of a highly developed character; they may denote a poorly-developed one—one that is ill adapted to social requirements. One man, on going into a room where there is a purse of money, may only after long deliberation and from conscious choice refrain from stealing it. Another person, under the same conditions, may be conscious of no choice, no effort, the desire to steal the purse being one that is foreign to his nature. In two such by no means uncommon instances, we should have no doubt as to which represented the higher type of character. Morally, it is not the feeling, "I could have acted dishonestly instead of honestly had I so chosen," that marks the ethically developed character, but the performance of the right action at the right moment, without a consciousness of tendency in the opposite direction. But the aim of education is, in the one direction, to weaken the sense of choice by the formation of right habits, moral and intellectual; and on the other hand by bringing man into a more direct contact with a wider and more complex environment, deliberation becomes one of the conditions of a co-ordination of ideas and actions that will result in a more perfect adaptation.

LIVERPOOL PUBLIC LIBRARY

IV.

SOME ALLEGED CONSEQUENCES OF DETERMINISM.

NOT the least curious aspect of the Free-Will controversy is that those who oppose Determinism base a large part of their argumentation upon the supposed evil consequences that will follow its acceptance. In a work from which I have already cited, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller falls foul of Determinism because, he says, while incompatible with morality, its champions nevertheless imagine they are leaving morality undisturbed. The real difficulty of Determinism is, he says, that in its world, events being fully determined, there can be no alternatives. Things are what they must be. They must be because they are. No man can help doing what he does. Man himself belongs to a sequence unending and unbroken. "To imagine therefore that Determinism, after annihilating the moral agent, remains compatible with morality, simply means that the logical implications of the doctrine have never been fully explored." And he adds: "The charge against it is not merely that it fails to do full justice to the ethical fact of responsibility, but that it utterly annihilates the moral agent." This, he says, is the real dilemma, and Determinism has never answered it.

It is curious that so clever a writer as Mr. Schiller

should fail to realize that taking Determinism in its most drastic form, and accepting it in the most unequivocal manner, nothing can suffer, because everything remains as it must be—including the facts, feelings, and consequences of the moral life. Observe, it is part of Mr. Schiller's case against Determinism that on determinist lines everything, down to the minutest happenings, is the necessary result of all antecedent and co-operating conditions. But this being the case, if Determinism leaves no room for chance or absolute origination, how comes it that an acceptance of Determinism initiates an absolutely new thing—the destruction of morality? Surely it is coming very near the absurd to charge Determinism with breaking an unbreakable sequence. It is surely idle to credit Determinism with doing what is impossible for it to accomplish So far as morality is a real thing, so far as the facts of the moral life are real things, Determinism must leave them substantially unaltered. The problem is, as has been already said, to find out for what exactly all these things stand. To read wrong meanings into the facts of life, and then to declare that the facts cease to exist if the meanings are corrected, is unphilosophical petulance.

It is, indeed, quite open to the Determinist to meet these grave fears as to the consequences of Determinism with a denial that morality is vitally concerned with the question of whether man's "will" be "free" or not. The question of Determinism may enter into the subject of how to develop character along desirable lines; and, apart from Determinism, it is difficult to see how there can

be anything like a scientific cultivation of character. But the fact of morality and the value of morality are not bound up with whether conduct be the expression of theoretically calculable factors, or whether it is, on the one side, determined by a self which originates its own impulses. Determinism or no Determinism, murder, to take an extreme illustration, is never likely to become an every-day occupation in human society. Neither can any other action that is obviously injurious to the well-being of society be practised beyond certain well-defined limits. The laws of social health operate to check socially injurious actions, as the laws of individual health operate to check injurious conduct in dietary or in hygiene. Determinists and Indeterminists, as may easily be observed, manifest a fairly uniform measure of conduct, and whatever variations from the normal standard each displays cannot well be put down to their acceptance or rejection of Determinism.

The real nature of morality is best seen if one asks oneself the question, "What is morality?" Let us imagine the human race reduced to a single individual. What would then be the scope and character of morality? It is without question that a large part of our moral rules would lose all meaning. Theft, murder, unchastity, slander, etc., would be without meanings, for the simple reason that there would be none against whom such offences could be committed. Would there be any moral laws or moral feelings left? Would there even be a man left under such conditions? One might safely query both statements. For if we take away

from this solitary individual all that social culture and intercourse have given him—language, knowledge, habits both mental and moral, all, in short, that has been developed through the agency of the social medium—man, as we know him, disappears, and a mere animal is left in his place. Even the feeling that a man has a duty to himself, and that to realize his highest possibilities is the most imperative of moral obligations, is only an illustration of the same truth. For very little analysis serves to show that even this derives its value from the significance of the individual to the social structure.

Morality, then, is wholly a question of relationship. Not whether my actions spring from a self-determined "will" or even whether they are the inevitable consequent of preceding conditions makes them moral or immoral, but their influence in forwarding or retarding certain ideal social relations. The rightness or wrongness of an action lies in its consequences. Whether one is of the Utilitarian or other school of morals does not substantially affect the truth of this statement. Action without consequences—assuming its possibility—would have no moral significance whatever. And consequences remain whether we accept or reject Determinism. Determinism cannot alter or regulate the consequences of actions, it can only indicate their causes and their results. What a science of morals is really concerned with is, objectively, the consequences of actions, and subjectively the feelings that lead to their performance. When a science of morals has determined what actions best promote desirable relations between human beings, and what

states of mind are most favourable to the performance of such actions, its task as a science of morals is concluded. The genesis of such states of mind belongs to psychology, just as to sociology belong the creation and maintenance of such social conditions as will best give them expression and actuality.

The question of the moral consequences of Determinism is not, therefore, discussed because we believe there is any relevancy in the issue thus raised, but solely because it is raised, and not to deal with it may create a prejudice against Determinism. Many of those who quite admit the scientific character of Determinism, yet insist on the necessity for some sort of Indeterminism in the region of morals. Professor William James, for instance, admits that a profitable study of mental phenomena is impossible unless we postulate Determinism (*Prin. Psych.* ii. 573). But having admitted this, and in fact illustrated it through the whole of his two volumes, his next endeavour is to find a place for " free-will " as a " moral postulate." The region of morals is thus made to play the part of a haven of refuge for illegitimate and unscientific theories, a kind of workhouse for all mental vagrants found at large without visible means of support. The moral postulate which is to reinstate " Free-Will," is that " What ought to be can be, and that bad acts cannot be fated, but that good ones must be possible in their place." In a writer usually so clear this somewhat ambiguous deliverance is far more indicative of a desire to befriend an oppressed theory than of the possession of any good evidence in its behalf.

The matter really turns upon what is meant by "ought" and "possible." It has already been pointed out that if by "possible" it is meant that although one thing actually occurs, another thing—a different thing—might have occurred without any alteration in the accompanying conditions, the statement is not only untrue in fact, but it is inconceivable as possibly true. And if it does not mean this, then Professor James is merely stating what every Determinist most cheerfully endorses. But in that case the "possibility" gives no support whatever to the Indeterminist. Further, Professor James says that Determinism is a clear and seductive conception so long as one "stands by the great scientific postulate that the world must be one unbroken fact, and that prediction of all things without exception must be ideally, even if not actually, possible." On which one may enquire, how prediction could be at all possible unless, given the co-operating conditions, a definite and particular result is inevitable? But if prediction be possible—and the whole power of science lies in its power of prediction—what becomes of the value of "possibility" to the Indeterminist? Is it any more than an expression of our ignorance of the power of particular factors, and a consequent ignorance of their resultant?

To say that certain things "ought" to be, or that one "ought" to act in this or that particular manner, are common expressions, and within limits, relevant and intelligible expressions. But "ought" here clearly stands for no more than ideal conception. Its reference is to the future,

not to the past. It does not imply a belief that things could have resulted other than those which actually did result, but a belief that given a suitable alteration in the conditions different results might ensue in the future. When, for example, I say that men ought to think wisely, I do not affirm either that all men do think wisely, or that foolish men can do so without some change in their mental make-up. I merely eliminate all those conditions that make for unwise thinking, leaving wise thinking as the only possible result. That is, recognizing that from different conditions different consequences will follow, in imagination, all forces that are inimical to the ideal end are eliminated. We say that no man ought to commit murder, and yet if we take as an illustration the congenital homicide, no one can assert that in his case, at least, anything but murder is possible, given favourable conditions for its perpetration. Or if it is said that congenital homicide is a purely pathological case, it may surely be asserted that the same general considerations apply to cases that are not classified as pathological. The more we know of the criminal's heredity, environment, and education, the more clearly it is seen that his deeds result from the inter-action of these factors, and that these must be modified if we are reasonably to expect any alteration in his conduct. In fact, the criminal—or the saint—being what he is as the result of the inter-action of possibly calculable factors is the essential condition towards making "the prediction of all things" ideally, if not actually possible. In saying, then, that a man

ought not to do wrong, we are only saying that our ideal of a perfect man eliminates the idea of wrong-doing, and that our imagination is powerful enough to construct a human character to which wrong-doing shall be alien.

The fallacy here is due to a confusion of the actual with the desirable. If we are looking to the past we are bound to say that "ought" is meaningless, because what has been is the only thing that could have been. Thus it is meaningless to say that a piece of string capable of withstanding a strain of half a hundredweight ought to have withstood a strain of half a ton. It is equally absurd to say that a man ought to have withstood the germ of malarial fever, when his constitution rendered him susceptible to attack. Both of these instances will be readily admitted. Is it, then, any more reasonable to say that a man ought to have withstood a temptation to drunkenness, or theft, or cruelty—in the sense that given his nature he *could* have withstood it—when all the circumstances of character, heredity, and environment made for his downfall? We say that certain considerations "ought" to have restrained Jones because they were enough to restrain Smith. Are we, then, to conclude that Smith and Jones are so much alike—are, in fact, identical in character—that the same forces will influence each in the same manner and to the same degree? The assumption is obviously absurd. What ought to have happened with Smith and Jones, bearing in mind all the conditions of the problem, is what did happen. What ought to happen to Smith and Jones

in the future will be equally dependent upon the extent to which the character of the two becomes modified. In this sense our conception of what "ought" to be in the future will guide us as to the nature of the influences we bring to bear upon Smith and Jones. We believe that good actions may be possible in the future where bad ones occured in the past, because we see that a change of conditions may produce the desired result. The "moral postulate," therefore, does not contain anything, or imply anything, in favour of Indeterminism. It does assert that certain things ought to be, but it can only realize this by recognizing, and acting upon the recognition, that just as certain forces in the past have issued in certain results, so a modification in the nature or incidence of these forces will produce a corresponding modification of conduct in the future. Whatever else there appears to be in the "ought" is a mere trick of the imagination; and the surprising thing is that a writer of the calibre of Professor James should not have been perfectly alive to this.

A cruder form of the same position, although introducing other issues, was upheld by Dr. Martineau in the categorical statement, "either free-will is a fact, or moral judgment a delusion." His reason for this remarkable statement is:—

> "We could never condemn one turn of act or thought did we not believe the agent to have command of another; and just in proportion as we perceive, in his temperament or education or circumstances, the certain preponderance of

> particular suggestions, and the near approach to an inner necessity, do we criticize him rather as a natural object than as a responsible being, and deal with his aberrations as maladies instead of sins."*

Well, human nature might easily have been nearer perfection than it is had moral aberrations been treated as maladies rather than sins, and one certainly would not have felt greater regret had judges and critics always been capable of rising to this level of judgment. Social, political, and religious malevolence might not have received the gratification and support it has received had this been the rule of judgment and the guide to methods of treatment, but our social consciousness would have been of a superior texture than is now the case. And one may ask whether there is any human action conceivable for which an adequate cause cannot be found in temperament or education or circumstances, or in a combination of the three? It would tax any one's ingenuity to name an action that lies outside the scope of these influences. Temperament, education, circumstances, are the great and controlling conditions of human action, and only in proportion as this is recognized and acted upon do we approach a science of human nature and begin to realize methods of profitable modification.

Against Determinism Dr. Martineau argues that "the moral life dwells exclusively in the voluntary

**Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii. p. 41.

sphere," and also that "impulses of spontaneous action do not constitute character." The first of these statements is at least very debatable, although it may turn upon a matter of definition. But the second statement is distinctly inaccurate. One may assert the exact opposite, and instead of saying that the impulses of spontaneous action do not constitute character, argue that they are the truest indications of character. Of course, from one point of view, all that a man does, whether it be spontaneous or reflective, must be equally the expression of the whole man. But from another point of view the more permanent and enduring characteristics of a man may be overborne by a passing flood of emotion or by a casual combination of unusual circumstances. By these means an habitually mean man may be roused to acts of generosity, an habitual thief roused to acts of honesty. Long reflection may cause a person to decide this or that, when his spontaneous impulses are in the contrary direction. And while these reflections and floods of emotion are equally with the spontaneous impulses part of a given personality, yet it will hardly be disputed that the latter are the more deeply seated, will express themselves in a more uniform manner, and are thus a truer and more reliable index to the character of the person with whom we are dealing.

How far we are to accept morality as dwelling exclusively in the voluntary, that is the intentional, sphere, is, as I have said, largely a matter of definition. We may so define morality that it shall cover only intentional acts, in which case the state-

ment must be accepted, or we can define morality in a wider sense, as covering all action by means of which desirable relations between people are maintained, in which case the statement is not true. For we should then be committed to the curious position that all moral development tends to make man less moral. To have the quality of voluntariness an act must be consciously performed with a particular end in view. But a large part of the more important functions of life do not come under this category, while a still larger portion are only semi-voluntary. The whole set of instincts that cluster round the family, the feelings which urge human beings to seek others' society, and which are the essential conditions of all social phenomena, do not properly come under the head of volition. Our conduct in any of these directions may easily be justified by reason, but it would be absurd to argue that there is any intentional choice involved.

Moreover, the chief aim of education, of the moralization of character, is to divest actions of their quality of reflectiveness or intention. Our aim here is so to fashion character that it will unquestioningly and instinctively place itself on the right side. This is a force that operates on all individuals more or less, and from the cradle to the grave. Family influences curb and fashion the egotism of the child until there is an unconscious and often unreasoning adherence to the family circle. Social influences continue the work and train the individual into an instinctive harmony, more or less complete with the structure of the society to which he belongs. The mere repetition

of a particular action involves the formation of a habit, and habit is meaningless in the absence of a modified nerve structure which reacts in a special manner. Persistence in right action, therefore, no matter how consciously it may be performed in its initial stages, inevitably passes over into unconscious or instinctive action. And let it be noted, too, that it is only when this change has been brought about that a person can be said to be a thoroughly moralized character. It is not the man who does right after a long internal struggle that is most moral, but the one with whom doing right is the most imperative of organic necessities. We praise the man who does right after struggle, but chiefly because of our admiration at the triumph of right over wrong, or because his weakness cries for support, or because he has in him the making of a more perfect character. But to place him as the superior of one whose right doing is the efflorescence of his whole nature is to misunderstand the ethical problem. And equally to confine morality to merely voluntary or intentional action is to truncate the sphere of morals to an extent that would meet with the approval of very few writers on ethics. In brief, one may not merely say with Lessing, "Determinism has nothing to fear from the side of morals," one may add that it is only on the theory of Determinism that the moralization of character becomes a rational possibility.

V.

PROFESSOR JAMES ON "THE DILEMMA OF DETERMINISM."

WE have seen in what has gone before how much of the case for Free-Will is based upon the wrong use of language, and upon a display of petulance arising from the degree to which it is assumed that the universe ought to fulfil certain *a priori* expectations. In this last respect the Volitionist behaves as if he were on a kind of shopping excursion, with full liberty to purchase or reject the goods brought out for inspection. Both of these points are well illustrated in an apology for Indeterminism offered by Professor William James, and although in examining his argument it may be necessary to repeat in substance some of the arguments already used, this will not be without its value in enabling the reader to realize the shifts to which the defender of Free-Will is compelled to resort. In justice to Professor James, however, it is only fair to point out that it is not quite clear that he is thoroughly convinced of the position he sees fit to state. Much of his argument reads as though he were merely stating a speculation that might prove valuable, but which might also turn out valueless. Still, whatever conviction he has, or had, appears to lean to the side of Indeterminism, and I shall accordingly deal with his argument as though he were quite convinced of its soundness.

In his chief work, *The Principles of Psychology*, Professor James took up the perfectly sane position that a man would be foolish not to espouse "the great scientific postulate" that the prediction of all things without exception must be possible, and drew a proper distinction between what is ideally possible—that is to complete knowledge—and what is actually possible to incomplete knowledge. In a later deliverance he, for the time at least, forsakes this position and champions a case which rests for its coherence very largely upon the neglect of those precautions previously insisted on.* To suit the necessities of the argument the Determinist is made to say things that I think few, if any, deterministS ever dreamed of saying, while certain leading words are used with a meaning obviously framed to meet the requirements of the case.

At the outset of his essay Professor James remarks that if a certain formula—in this case the Determinist formula—"for expressing the nature of the world violates my moral demands, I shall feel as free to throw it overboard, or at least to doubt it, as if it disappointed my demand for uniformity of sequence." And he proceeds to argue that all our scientific "laws" are ideal constructions, built up in order to satisfy certain demands of our nature. Uniformity in nature is thus as much a formula framed to this end as is Free-Will. "If this be admitted," he says, "we can debate on even terms."

*See the lecture on "The Dilemma of Determinism" in the volume *The Will to Believe, and other Essays*, London; 1903.

Unfortunately for the Professor's argument the two instances are not analogous—not, at least, in the direction required. The sense of causality is not something that is innate in human nature. Children at an early age hardly possess it, and primitive man has it in only a very vague manner. The conviction that all things are bound together in terms of causation is one that belongs, even to-day, to the educated, thoughtful mind. At any rate it is a conviction that has been forced upon the human mind by the sheer pressure of experience. It is a growth consequent upon the mind's intercourse with the objective universe. And its validity is not called into question. On the other hand, this assumed 'moral demand" for "Free-Will" is the very point in dispute. Whether there is such a demand, and if so is it a legitimate one, are the questions upon which the discussion turns. And it will not do for Professor James to claim Free-Will in the name of certain "moral demands" and reserve the right to throw overboard any theory that does not grant them. Man's moral nature, equally with his intellectual nature, must in the last resort yield to facts. It will not do to exalt into a moral instinct what may be no more than a personal idiosyncrasy. There is certainly no more than this in such expressions as "something must be fatally unreasonable, absurd, and wrong in the world," or "I deliberately refuse to keep on terms of loyalty with the universe," if certain things turn out to be true. Such phrases are completely out of place in a scientific enquiry. The universe will remain what it is whether we call it absurd or rational,

and may even survive the raising of the standard of revolt by so eminent a psychologist as Professor James, to whom we would commend, were he still alive, Schopenhauer's profound remark that there are no moral phenomena, only moral interpretations of phenomena.

What, now, is the insuperable dilemma which Professor James places before upholders of Determinism? The whole of it turns out to be little more than a play upon the words "possible" and "actual." Determinism, he says, professes that "those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree (Why 'appoint' and 'decree'? Why not the impersonal word 'determine?') what the other parts shall be." The future is determined by the past; and given the past, only one future is possible. Indeterminism says that "the parts have a certain amount of loose play on one another, so that the laying down of one of them does not necessarily determine what the others shall be." Thus, still following Professor James's exposition, given a special instance, both sides admit the occurrence of a volition. The Determinist asserts that no other volition could have occurred. The Indeterminist asserts that another volition might have occurred, other things remaining the same. And, asks the Professor, can science tell us which is correct? His reply is, No. "How can any amount of assurance that something actually happened give us the least grain of information as to whether another thing might or might not have happened in its place? Only facts can be proved by other facts. With things that are

possibilities and not facts, facts have no concern."

The position may be made clearer by taking the Professor's own illustration. When, he says, I leave this lecture hall I may go home *via* Divinity Avenue, or traverse Oxford Street. It is a matter of chance which route is selected. But assume that by some miracle, after having walked down Divinity Avenue, ten minutes of time are annihilated, and reaching the Hall door again Oxford Street is the route selected. Spectators thus have two alternative universes. One universe with the Professor walking through Divinity Avenue, the other with him walking through Oxford Street. If the spectators are Determinists they will believe only one universe to have been from eternity possible. But, asks Professor James, looking outwardly at these two universes, can anyone say which is the accidental and which is the necessary one? "In other words, either universe *after the fact* and once there would, to our means of observation and understanding, appear just as rational as the other." There is no means by which we can distinguish chance from a rational necessity. A universe which allows a certain loose play of the parts is as rational as one which submits to the most rigid determinism.

Before dealing with the above, it is necessary to take another phrase on which much of the above argument depends. Professor James says that the stronghold of the Determinist sentiment is antipathy to the idea of "Chance," and chance is a notion not to be entertained by any sane mind. And the sting, he says, seems to rest on the

assumption that chance is something positive, and if a thing happens by chance it must needs be irrational and preposterous But I am not aware that any scientific Determinist ever used " chance " as being a positive term at all. Certainly the last thing the present writer would dream of doing would be to predicate chance of any portion of the objective universe whatsoever. The only legitimate use of the word is in reference to *the state of our knowledge concerning phenomena.* To say that a thing chanced, or happened by chance, is only saying that we are not aware of the causes that produced it. We say nothing of the thing itself, we only express the state of our mind in relation to it.

Professor James says all you mean by " chance " is that a thing is not guaranteed, it may fall out otherwise. Not guaranteed by our knowledge about the thing, certainly ; in any other sense, his definition seems invented for the express purpose of bolstering up his hypothesis. For, he says, a chance thing means that the general system of things has no hold on it. It appears in relation to other things, but it escapes their determining influence, and appears as " a free gift." Thus whether he walked down Divinity Avenue or Oxford Street was a matter of chance ; and the future of the world is full of similar chances—events that may take one of several forms, either of which is consistent with the whole.

We now have the essence of Professor James's case, and can consider it in detail. First of all we may note the curiously double sense in which

Professor James uses the word "fact" and the agility with which he skips from one meaning to another, as it suits his argument. In a broad and general sense a mental fact is as much a fact as any other fact. A man riding on horseback is a fact. My vision or conception of a horse with the head of a man is equally a fact, though nothing like it exists in nature. We should discriminate between the two by saying that one is a mental fact strictly relative to a particular mind, the other is an objective fact relative to all minds normally constituted. Now science does not deny possibilities as *mental facts*. But it would be a very queer science indeed that allowed all sorts of possibilities of a given group of phenomena *under identical conditions*. Like "chance," the possibilities of the Universe are strictly relative to our knowledge concerning it. If opposite things appear equally possible, it is only because we are not sufficiently conversant with the processes to say which thing is certain. A universe with Professor James walking down Divinity Avenue appears as orderly and as natural as one with him parading Oxford Street. But this is because we cannot unravel the complex conditions that may determine the selection of one route or the other. Or if it be said in reply, that the walker is unaware of any choice in the matter, the answer is that there is present the desire to get away from the lecture hall and arrive at home, and this is strong enough to make the choice of means to that end unimportant. If the choice lay between walking down a sunlit street or wading through a mile of water, five feet deep, while the

latter would still remain a possibility, since it could be done were the inducement to do it strong enough, there is not much doubt as to what the choice would actually be.

The complete reply therefore to Professor James's illustration is that from the standpoint of mere possibility, bearing in mind the proper significance of possibility, opposite alternatives may be equally real. We can, that is, conceive conditions under which a certain thing may occur, and we can conceive another set of conditions under which exactly the opposite may occur. And either alternative presents us with a universe that is equally "rational," because in either case we vary the co-operating conditions in order to produce the imagined consequence. But given a complete knowledge of all the co-operating conditions, and not only do two views of the universe cease to be equally rational, but one of them ceases to be even conceivable. For let us note that the resultant of *any* calculation is no more and no less than a synthesis of the factors that are included in the calculation. If we do not understand the factors included in a given synthesis it will be a matter of "chance" what the resultant may be. But if we do understand the nature of the factors, and the consequence of their synthesis, possibility and actuality become convertible terms. Finally, whether a man on leaving a lecture hall turns to the right or the left appears, under ordinary conditions, equally rational and natural only because we are aware that it may be a matter of indifference which direction he takes, and in that case his action

will be governed by the simple desire to get away, or to get to a particular spot. It is a simple deduction from experience presented by Professor James in a needlessly confusing manner.

The next, and practically the only example cited by Professor James to prove that this world is a world of "chances," is concerned with a question of morals. We constantly, he says, have occasion to make "judgments of regret." In illustration of this, he cites the case of a particularly brutal murder, and adds, "We feel that, although a perfect mechanical fit to the rest of the universe, it is a bad moral fit, and that something else would really have been better in its place." But "calling a thing bad means, if it means anything at all, that the thing ought not to be, that something else ought to be in its stead." If Determinism denies this it is defining the universe as a place "in which what ought to be is impossible," and this lands us in pessimism, or if we are to escape pessimism we can only do so by abandoning the judgment of regret. But if our regrets are necessitated nothing else can be in their place, and the universe is what it was before--a place in which what ought to be appears impossible. Murder and treachery cannot be good without regret being bad, regret cannot be good without murder and treachery being bad. As both, however, are foredoomed, something must be fatally wrong and absurd in the world.

Now, I must confess all this seems a deal of bother concerning a fairly simple matter. Indeed, Professor James seems to be engaged in raising a dust and then complaining of the murkiness of the

atmosphere. Coming from a writer of less standing I might, in view of what has been said elsewhere in this essay, have left the reply to the careful reader's understanding of the subject. But from so eminent a psychologist as William James silence might well be construed as deterministic inability to reply to the position laid down.

In the first place, I may be pardoned for again reminding the reader that, in this connection, "ought" stands upon precisely the same level as "possible." Whether we say that a man ought to do a certain thing, or that it is possible for him to do a certain thing, we are making identical statements, for no one would dream of saying that a man ought to do that which it is impossible for him to perform. When we say that murder and treachery ought not to be, we do not imply—if we use language properly—that these are not as much part of the cosmic order, and as much the expression of co-operating conditions, as are kindness and loyalty. It is saying no more than that in our judgment human nature may be so trained and conditioned as to practise neither murder nor treachery. We are expressing a judgment as to what our ideal of human nature is, and our ideal of what human nature should be is based upon what experience has taught us concerning its possibilities. Man's "judgment of regret" is justifiable and admirable, not because he recognizes that the past could have been different from what it was, but because it furnishes him with the requisite experience for a better direction of action in the future, and because the feeling of regret is itself

one of the determining conditions that will decide conduct in the future.

"The question," says Professor James, "is of things, not of eulogistic names for them." With this I cordially agree; but in that case what are we to make of the following:—

> "The only consistent way of representing . . . a world whose parts may affect one another through their conduct being either good or bad is the indeterminate way. What interest, zest, or excitement can there be in achieving the right way, unless we are enabled to feel that the wrong way is also a possible and a natural way—nay, more, a menacing and an imminent way? And what sense can there be in condemning ourselves for taking the wrong way, unless we need have done nothing of the sort, unless the right way was open to us as well? I cannot understand the willingness to act, no matter how we feel, without the belief that acts are really good or bad. I cannot understand the belief that an act is bad, without regret at its happening. I cannot understand regret without the admission of real genuine possibilities in the world."

Eliminate from this all that is matter of common agreement between Determinists and Indeterminists, and what have we left but sheer verbal confusion? The pleasurable feeling that results from a sense of achievement is real no matter what are the lines on which the universe is constructed.

One might as reasonably ask, Why feel a greater interest in a first-class orchestral performance, than in the harmonic outrages of a hurdy-gurdy, since both are, from the physical side, vibratory phenomena? And is it not clear, to repeat a truth already emphasized, that a most important factor in our condemning ourselves for doing a wrong action is the fact that we have done so. It is one of the determining conditions of doing better actions in future. Of course, Professor James cannot understand the belief that an act is bad, without regret at its happening. Neither can anyone else, for the simple reason that one involves the other. The statement is as much a truism as is the one that we can have no willingness to act unless we believe that acts are either good or bad. Equally true is it that regret implies real possibilities in the world—not always, though, for we may regret death or the radiation into extra terrestrial space of solar energy without believing that the prevention of either is possible. But our possibilities in relation to conduct do not, as the argument implies, relate to the past, but to the future. Indeed, the sense of possibility would be morally worthless were it otherwise.

Finally, and this brings me to what is one of the cardinal weaknesses of so much of the writing on psychology, Professor James's argument is vitiated by non-recognition of the fact that regret and satisfaction, praise and blame, with most of the cardinal moral qualities, are *social* in their origin and application. They represent the reaction of our social feelings against anti-social conduct, or

their expression of satisfaction at conduct of an opposite character. They are consequently the creations, not of an indwelling " will," but of an outdwelling social relationship. They are not impressed by the " ego " upon the world, they are impressed by the world upon the ego. Character is not something that each individual brings ready fashioned to the service of society ; it is something that society itself creates. It has been fashioned by countless generations of social evolution, and, in the main, that evolution has of necessity placed due emphasis upon those intellectual and moral qualities on which social welfare depends.

VI.

THE NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

If Hume was not right in asserting that a few intelligible definitions would put an end to the Free-Will controversy, his error lay in assuming a greater receptivity of mind than most people possess. For it may safely be asserted that once the legitimate meanings of the terms employed are acknowledged, and they are properly applied to the matter in dispute, it may be shown that the opponents of Determinism have been beating the air. The Determinism they attack is not the Determinism that is either professed or defended. The consequences they forecast follow only from a distorted, and often meaningless, use of the terms employed. Instead of the Determinist denying the moral and mental value of certain qualities of which the Indeterminist announces himself the champion, he admits their value, gives them a definite meaning, and proves that it is only by an assumption of the truth of the cardinal principle of Determinism that they have any reality. This has already been shown to be true in the case of Freedom, Choice, Deliberation, etc.; it remains to pursue the same method with such conceptions as praise and blame or punishment and reward, and responsibility.

The charge is, again, that Determinism robs

praise and blame and responsibility of all meaning, and reduces them to mere verbal expressions which some may mistake for the equivalents of reality, but which clearer thinkers will estimate at their true worth. What is the use of praising or blaming if each one does what heredity, constitution, and environment compels? Why punish a man for being what he is? Why hold him responsible for the expressions of a character provided for him, and for the influence of an environment which he had no part in forming? So the string of questions run on. None of them, it may safely be said, would ever be asked if all properly realized the precise meaning and application of the terms employed. For as with the previous terms examined, it is an acceptance of Indeterminism that would rob these words of all value. Rationally conceived they are not only consonant with Determinism, but each of them implies it.

Of the four terms mentioned above—Praise, Blame, Punishment, and Responsibility, the cardinal and governing one is the last. It will be well, therefore, to endeavour to fix this with some degree of clearness.

To commence with we may note that in contra-distinction to "freedom" where the testimony of consciousness is illegitimately invoked, a consciousness of responsibility is essential to its existence. A person in whom it was manifestly impossible to arouse such a consciousness would be unhesitatingly declared to be irresponsible. There is here, consequently, both the fact of responsibility and our consciousness of it that calls

for explanation. And both require for an adequate explanation a larger area than is offered by mere individual psychology. Indeed, so long as we restrict ourselves to the individual we cannot understand either the fact or the consciousness of responsibility. By limiting themselves in this manner some Determinists have been led to deny responsibility altogether. The individual, they have said, does not create either his own organism or its environment, and consequently all reasonable basis for responsibility disappears. To which there is the effective reply that the datum for responsibility is found in the nature of the organism and in the possibility of its being affected by certain social forces, and not in the absolute origination of its own impulses and actions. It is playing right into the hands of the Indeterminist to deny so large and so important a social phenomenon as responsibility. And to the Indeterminist attack, that if action is the expression of heredity, organism, and environment, there is no room for responsibility, there is the effective reply that it is precisely because the individual's actions are the expression of all the forces brought to bear upon him that he may be accounted responsible. The Determinist has often been too ready to take the meanings and implications of words from his opponent, instead of checking the sense in which they were used.

The general sense of responsibility—omitting all secondary meanings—is that of accountability, to be able to reply to a charge, or to be able to answer a claim made upon us. This at once

gives us the essential characteristic of responsibility, and also stamps it as a phenomenon of social ethics. A man living on a desert island would not be responsible, unless we assume his responsibility to deity; and even here we have the essential social fact—relation to a person—reintroduced. It is our relations to others, that and the influence of our actions upon others, combined with the possibility of our natures being affected by the praise or censure of the social body to which we belong, which sets up the fact of responsibility. Conduct creates a social reaction, good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable, and the reacting judgment of society awakens in each of us a consciousness of responsibility, more or less acute, and more or less drastic, to society at large. The individual sees himself in the social mirror. His nature is fashioned by the social medium, his personal life becomes an expression of the social life. Just as the social conscience, in the shape of a legal tribunal, judges each for actions that are past, so the larger social conscience, as expressed in a thousand and one different forms, customs, and associations, judges us for those desires and dispositions that may result in action in the future. Responsibility as a phenomenon of social psychology is obvious, educative, inescapable, and admirable. Responsibility as a phenomenon of individual psychology, whether from the Determinist or Indeterminist point of view, is positively meaningless.

Taking, then, responsibility as a fact of social life, with its true significance of accountability, let

us see its meaning on deterministic lines. For the sake of clearness we will first take legal responsibility as illustrating the matter. In law a man is accounted guilty provided he knows the law he is breaking, and also that he is capable of appreciating the consequences of his actions. A further consideration of no mean importance is that the consequences attending the infringement of the law are assumed to be sufficiently serious to counterbalance the inducements to break the regulation. And as all citizens are assumed to know the law, we may confine our attention to the last two aspects. What, then, is meant by ability to appreciate consequences? There can be no other meaning than the capacity to create an ideal presentment of the penalties attaching to certain actions. Every promise of reward or threat of punishment assumes this, and assumes also that provided the ideal presentment is strong enough, certain general results will follow. It is on this principle alone that punishments are proportioned to offences, and that certain revisions of penalties take place from time to time. Negatively the same thing is shown by the fact that young children, idiots, and lunatics are not legally held responsible for their actions. The ground here is that the power to represent ideally the full consequences of actions is absent, or operates in an abnormal manner. Moreover, the whole line of proof to establish insanity in a court of law is that a person is not amenable to certain desires and impulses in the same manner as are normally constituted people.

Substantially the same thing is seen if we take the fact of responsibility in non-legal matters. A very young child, incapable of ideally representing consequences, is not considered a responsible being. An older child has a limited responsibility in certain simple matters. As it grows older, and growth brings with it the power of more fully appreciating the consequence of actions, its responsibility increases in the home, in the school; in business, social, religious, and political circles it is held accountable for its conduct, in proportion as the power of estimating the consequences of actions is assumed. In other words, we assume not that there is at any stage an autonomous or self-directing "will" in operation, but that a particular quality of motive will operate at certain stages of mental development, and the whole of the educative process, in the home, the school, and in society, aims at making these motives effective. That is, the whole fact of responsibility assumes as a datum the very condition that the Indeterminist regards as destroying responsibility altogether. He argues that if action is the expression of character, responsibility is a farce. But it is precisely because action is the expression of character that responsibility exists. When the law, or when society, calls a man to account for something he has done, it does not deny that had he possessed a different character he would have acted differently. It does not assert that at the time of action he could have helped doing what he did. Both may be admitted. What it does say is that having a character of such and such a kind certain things

are bound to follow. But inasmuch as that character may be modified by social opinion or social coercion, inasmuch as it will respond to certain influences brought to bear upon it, it is a responsible character, and so may be held accountable for its actions.

There is, therefore, nothing incompatible between Determinism and Responsibility. The incompatibility lies between Indeterminism and Responsibility. What meaning can we attach to it, on what ground can we call a person to account, if our calling him to account is not one of the considerations that will affect his conduct? Grant that a consciousness of responsibility decides how a person shall act, and the principle of Determinism is admitted. Deny that a consciousness of responsibility determines action, and the phrase loses all meaning and value. The difficulty arises, as has been said, by ignoring the fact that responsibility is of social origin, and in looking for an explanation in individual psychology. It would, of course, be absurd to make man responsible for being what he is, but so long as he is amenable to the pressure of normal social forces he is responsible or accountable for what he may be. Whatever his character be, so long as it has the capacity of being affected by social pressure, it is a responsible character. And this is the sole condition that makes responsibility intelligible.

Having said this, it is not difficult to see the place of punishment and reward, or praise and blame, in the Determinist scheme of things. Another word than punishment might be selected,

and one that would be without its unpleasant associations, but on the whole it is advisable perhaps to retain the word in order to see the nature of the problem clearly. Of course, punishment in the sense of the infliction of pain merely because certain actions have been committed, no Determinist would countenance. So far as punishment is inflicted in this spirit of sheer retaliation it serves only to gratify feelings of malevolence. A society that punishes merely to gratify resentment is only showing that it can be as brutal collectively as individuals can be singly. And if punishment begins and ends with reference to the past, then it is certainly revolting to inflict pain upon a person because he has done what education and organization impelled him to do. So far one can agree with Professor Sidgwick that when a man's conduct is "compared with a code, to the violation of which punishments are attached, the question whether he really could obey the rule by which he is judged is obvious and inevitable." But when he goes on to reply "If he could not, it seems contrary to our sense of justice to punish him," the reply is, Not if the code is one that normal human nature can obey, and the individual one who can be modified in a required direction in both his own interest and the interest of others. For if our punishment is prospective instead of retrospective, or at least retrospective only so far as to enable us to understand the character of the individual with whom we are dealing, and using punishment as one of the means of securing a desirable modification of character, then punish-

ment is merged in correction, and receives a complete justification upon Deterministic lines.

The problem is comparatively simple. Actions being decided by motives, the problem with a socially defective character is how to secure the prevalence of desires that will issue in desirable conduct. A man steals; the problem then is, How can we so modify the character of which stealing is the expression, so that we may weaken the desire to steal and strengthen feelings that will secure honesty of action? On the lower plane society resorts to threats of pains and penalties, so that when the desire to steal arises again, the knowledge that certain measures will be taken against the offender will arrest this desire. This is one of the principal grounds on which a measure like the First Offenders Act is based. On a higher plane the approval and respect of society serve to awaken a positive liking for honesty and the formation of desirable mental habits. Praise and blame rest upon a precisely similar basis. Man being the socialized animal he is, the approbation and disapprobation of his fellows must always exert considerable influence on his conduct. The memory of censure passed or of praise bestowed acts as one of the many influences that will determine conduct when the critical moment for action arrives. Man does not always consciously put the question of what his social circle will think of his actions, but this feeling rests upon a deeper and more secure basis than that of consciousness. It has been, so to speak, worked into his nature by all the generations of social life that have preceded his existence,

and to escape it means to put off all that is distinctly human in his character. Every time we praise or blame an action we are helping to mould character, for both will serve as guides in the future. And it is just because at the moment of action a person "could not help doing" what he did that there is any reasonable justification for either approval or censure. Social approval and disapproval become an important portion of the environment to which the human being must perforce adapt himself.

What use could there be in punishing or blaming a man if his actions are determined, not by realizable motives, but by a mysterious will that in spite of our endeavours remains uninfluenced? If neither the promise nor the recollection of punishment creates feelings that will determine conduct, then one might as well whip the wind. Its only purpose is to gratify our own feelings of anger or malevolence. It is equally futile to look for the cause of wrong-doing in education, organization, or environment. For in proportion as we recognize any or all of these factors as determining conduct we are deserting the Indeterminist position, and relinquishing the "freedom" of the will. If Indeterminism be true we are forced to believe that although as a consequence of ill-conduct evil feelings may arise with greater frequency, yet they must be wholly ineffective as influencing action. It cannot even be argued that certain motives offer stronger attraction than others to the will, for this in itself would be a form of determinism. There is no middle course. Either the "will" remains absolutely uninfluenced

by threat of punishment or desire for praise, serenely indifferent to the conflict of desires, and proof against the influence of education, or it forms a part of the causative sequence and the truth of Determinism is admitted. You cannot at the same time hold that man does not act in accordance with the strongest motive, and decide that the "will" maintains its freedom by deciding which motive shall be the strongest—its own determination not being the product of previous training. One need, indeed, only state the Indeterminist position plainly to see its inherent absurdity.

If ever in any case the argument *ad absurdem* was applicable it is surely here. It may safely be said that the larger part of the life of each of us is passed in anticipating the future in the light of experience. But if "Free-Will" be a fact, on what ground can we forecast the future. If motives do not determine conduct, any prophecy of what certain people may do in a given situation is futile. The will being indetermined, what they have done in the past is no guide as to what they will do in the future. If motives did not decide then they will not decide now. Whether we read backward or forward makes no difference. We have no right to say that the actions of certain statesmen prove them to have been animated by the desire for wealth or power. That would imply Determinism. We cannot say that because a murder has been committed a certain person who bore the deceased ill-will is rightly suspected. This is assuming that conduct is determined by motives. If we see a person jump into the river, we have no right to argue that depressed

health, or financial worry, or impending social disgrace, has caused him to commit suicide. The mother may as easily murder her child as nurse it. The workman may labour as well for a bare pittance as for a comfortable wage. A man outside a house in the early hours of the morning, armed with a dark lantern and a jemmy, may have no desire to commit a burglary. A person with a game bag and a gun furnishes no reliable data for believing that he intends to shoot something. In all of these cases, and in hundreds of others, if "free-will" be a fact we have no right to argue from actions to motives, or infer motives from actions. Motives do not rule, and we are witnessing the uncaused and unaccountable vagaries of an autonomous will.

It is sometimes said that no matter how convinced a Determinist one may be, one always acts as though the will were free. This, so far from being true, is the reverse of what really happens. In all the affairs of life people of all shades of opinion concerning Determinism really act as though "Free-Will" had no existence. It would, indeed, be strange were it otherwise. Facts are more insistent than theories, and in the last resort it is the nature of things which determines the course of our actions. Nature, while permitting considerable latitude in matters of theory or opinion, allows comparatively little play in matters of conduct. And it may be asserted that a society which failed to acknowledge in its conduct the principle of Determinism would stand but small chance of survival. As a matter of fact, when it comes to practical work the theory of "Free-Will" is ignored and the theory of

Determinism acted upon. The unfortunate thing is that the maintenance of "Free-Will" in the sphere of opinion serves to check the wholesome application of the opposite principle. Theory is used to check action instead of serving its proper function as a guide to conduct.

Still, it is instructive to note to what extent in the sphere of practice the principle of Determinism is admitted. In dealing with the drink question, for instance, temperance reformers argue that a diminution in the number of public-houses, and the creation of opportunities for healthy methods of enjoyment, will diminish temptation and weaken the desire for alcoholic stimulants. In the training of children stress is rightly laid upon the importance of the right kind of associates, the power of education, and of healthy physical surroundings. With adults, the beneficial influences of fresh air, good food, well-built houses, open spaces, and healthy conditions of labour have become common-places of sociology. In every rational biography attention is paid to the formative influences of parents, friends, and general environment. Medical men seek the cause of frames of mind in nervous structure, and predisposition to physical, mental, and moral disease in heredity. Statisticians point to absolute uniformity of general human action under certain social conditions. Moralists point to the power of ideals on people's minds. Religious teachers emphasize the power of certain teachings in reducing particular habits. In all these cases no allowance whatever is made for the operation of an undetermined will. The motive theory of action may not be consciously in

the minds of all, but it is everywhere and at all times implied in practice.

In strict truth, we cannot undertake a single affair in life without making the assumption that people will act in accordance with certain motives, and that these in turn will be the outcome of specific desires. If I journey from here to Paris I unconsciously assume that certain forces—the desire to retain a situation, to earn a living, to satisfy a sense of duty —will cause all the officials connected with boat and train service to carry out their duties in a given manner. If I appeal for the protection of the police I am again counting upon certain motives influencing the official mind in a particular manner. All commercial transactions rest upon the same unconscious assumption. A merchant who places an order with a firm in Russia, America, or Japan, or who sends goods abroad, counts with absolute confidence upon certain desires and mental states so influencing a number of people with whom he has no direct connection, that they will co-operate in landing the goods at the point desired. Or if the goods are not transmitted as desired, it is not because the principle upon which he relied is invalid, but because other desires have operated in a more powerful manner. A general commanding an army acts on precisely the same principle. The ideal of duty, of the honour of the regiment, the desire for distinction, are all counted upon as being powerful enough to serve as motives that will cause men to join in battle, storm a risky position, or take part in a forlorn hope. History is read upon the same principle. The statement that Nero was cruel, that

Henry the Eighth was of an amatory nature, that Charles I. was tyrannical, or that Louis the Fifteenth was licentious, could not be made unless we argue that their actions imply the existence of certain motives. That the motive theory of the will is true is admitted in practice by all. The Indeterminist admits it even in his appeal to "Liberty." He is counting upon the desire for freedom (sociologically) as being strong enough to lead people to reject a theory which denies its applicability to morals.

Human nature becomes a chaos if Determinism is denied. Neither a science of human conduct nor of history is possible in its absence; for both assume a fundamental identity of human nature beneath all the comparatively superficial distinctions of colour, creed, or national divisions. The determination of the influence of climate, food, inter-tribal or international relations, of the power of ideals—moral, religious, military, national, etc.—are all so many exercises in the philosophy of Determinism. In none of these directions do we make the least allowance for the operation of an uncaused "will." We say with absolute confidence that given a people with a military environment, and either its discomforts produce an anti-militarist feeling, or its glamour evokes a strong militarist feeling. So with all other consideration that comes before us. And as Determinism enables us to read and understand history and life, so it also provides a basis upon which we can work for reform. In the belief that certain influences will produce, in the main, a particular result, we can lay our plans and work

with every prospect of ultimate success. Instead of our best endeavours being left at the mercy of an undetermined "will," they take their place as part of the determining influences that are moulding human nature. Every action becomes a portion of the environment with which each has to deal. More, it becomes a portion of the agent's own environment, a part of that ideal world in which we all more or less live. And the heightened consciousness that every action leaves a certain residuum for either good or ill, supplies in itself one of the strongest incentives for the exercise of self-control and furnishes an unshakable basis for self-development.

VII.

DETERMINISM AND CHARACTER.

In spite of what has been said, it may be that a protest will still be raised by some on behalf of character. A man's character, it will be argued, is an alienable personal possession. What he does belongs to him in a sense that is peculiar to his personality. In many important instances his actions bear the stamp of individuality in so plain a manner that while we cannot predict what he will do, once it is done we recognize by the peculiar nature of the action that it must have been done by him and by none other. In painting, in music, in literature, and in many other walks of life, we are able to infer authorship by the personality stamped upon the production. Moreover, nothing that we can do or say will ever destroy the conviction that my actions are *mine*. They proceed from *me;* they are the expressions of *my* character; it is this feeling that induces me to plead guilty to the charge of responsibility, and this conviction remains after all argument has been urged. But, it is further asked, how can this be aught but an illusion if I am not the real and determining cause of my conduct? If I and my actions are the products of a converging series of calculable or indetermined forces, are we not compelled to dismiss this conviction as pure myth? Must I not conclude that I am no more the determining cause of my conduct than a stone determines whether it shall fall to the ground or not?

And is not the cultivation of character, therefore, an absurd futility?

Now although the Determinist will dissent from the conclusions of those who argue in this way, with a great deal of the argument he would agree; more than that, he would enforce the same line of reasoning as a legitimate inference from his own position. And he might also submit that it is only by an acceptance of the deterministic position that such reasoning can receive full justification.

What do we mean by character? Suppose we reply with T. H. Green by defining character as the way in which a man seeks self-satisfaction.* We are next faced with the problem of accounting for the different ways in which self-satisfaction is sought. One man is a drunkard and another temperate, one is benevolent and another grasping, one is cruel and another kind; there are endless diversities of human conduct, and all come within the scope of Green's definition of character. We have to look farther and deeper. A satisfactory answer clearly cannot be found in the assumption that each person's actions proceed from an unfettered, autonomous will. The reason for the choice would still have to be discovered. Nor will it do to attribute the difference of choice to different environmental influences in which the "self" is placed. This would indeed be reducing the man to the level of a machine, or to a lower level still. And the same environmental influences do *not* produce identical results. This is one of the commonest

**Works,* vol. ii. p. 142.

facts of daily experience. Stimulus from the environment is the essential condition of action, but the precise nature of the action elicited is an affair of the organism. If I am courageous by nature I shall stay and face a threatened danger. If I am cowardly I shall run away. Thus, while circumstances are the cause of my acting, how I shall act is in turn caused by my character, the net result being due to their interaction. This seems so obvious that it may well be accepted as a datum common to both parties in the dispute.

We may, then, freely grant the Indeterminist—what he foolishly assumes is inconsistent with the Deterministic position—that environment may be modified by character, that a man is not the creature of circumstances, if we restrict that word to external circumstances, as is so often done. A man, we will say, allowing for the influence of external circumstances, acts according to his character. The question then becomes, "What is his character? How does he acquire it?* And whence the varieties of character?" To these queries the only intelligible reply is that a man's character represents his psychic heritage, as his body represents his physical heritage, both of them being subject to development and modification by post-natal influences. Each one thus brings a different psychic force, or a different character, to bear upon the world around him. He

*Of course, the man and his character are not two distinct things. The character is the man. But it would involve needless circumlocution to insist on superfine distinctions, and it may even help to a comprehension of the argument to keep to familiar forms of speech.

is thus the author of his acts, not in the unintelligible sense of absolutely originating the sequence that proceeds from his actions, but in the rational sense of being that point in the sequence that is represented by his personality. And his actions bear the stamp of his personality because had his antecedents been different his actions would have varied accordingly. Each is properly judged in terms of character, because it is the character which determines the form taken by the reaction of the organism on the environment.

We may go even further than this and say that it is only actions which proceed from character that are properly the subject of moral judgment. Let us take a concrete illustration of this. A man distributes a large sum of money among the inhabitants of a town, some of it in the form of personal gifts among its needy inhabitants, the rest in endowing various institutions connected with its social and municipal life. Twelve months later he comes forward as candidate in a parliamentary election. The question of his donations at once comes up for judgment, and in defence he may plead that he was only invited to contest the seat after the money was given. How shall we determine what his motives were? Obviously by an appeal to his character. If he were well known as a wealthy person of recognized benevolent disposition, it would be argued that while his candidature would inevitably reap benefit from his donations it was highly probable that in giving the money he was only acting as one would expect him to act. If, on the other hand, he was well known as a person of a mean and grasping

disposition, it would be concluded that the donation was an attempt to bribe the electorate, his giving the money so long before being an intelligent anticipation of events. In either case we should be appealing to character, and judging the man by what of his character was known. Numerous instances of a like kind might be given, but in every case it would be found that we infer from an action a particular kind of motive, and that our judgment of the motive is determined by the character of the individual. This is so far the case that we are apt to mistrust our own judgment when we find a benevolent person doing what looks like a mean action, or a brave person committing what looks like an act of cowardice. While action is thus —so far as it is intentional—always the registration of motive, and motive the expression of a preponderating desire, the desire, whether it be licentious or chaste, noble or ignoble, is the outcome of character.

Determinism thus finds a fit and proper place for character in its philosophy of things. It does not say that the fact or the consideration of character is irrelevant; on the contrary, it says it is all-important. And in saying this it challenges the position of the Indeterminist by the implication that it is only on lines of Determinism that character is important or that it can be profitably cultivated. For consider what is meant by saying that conduct implies and proceeds from character. It clearly implies that a man acts in this or that manner because he has been in the habit of acting in this or that manner. We do not gather grapes from thistles, and we do not

experience noble actions from a depraved character. The actions of each are determined by the character of each, and character is in turn the outcome of psychic inheritance, plus the effects of the interaction of organism and environment from the moment of birth onward. Personal characteristics, honesty, courage, truthfulness, loyalty, thus imply strictly determined qualities. They are qualities determined by the nature of the organism. They could not be expressed unless the surrounding circumstances were favourable to their expression; but neither could they be manifested unless the character was of a particular order. Conduct is, in fact, always a product of the two things.

Let us also note that it is this determination of qualities that is implied when we speak of a good or a bad, a strong or a weak character. We should not call a man a good character who to-day fed a starving child, and to-morrow kicked it from his doorstep. We should describe him as, at best, a person of an exceedingly variable disposition who satisfied the caprice of the moment irrespective of the feelings and needs of others. We should not call a person strong who withstood a temptation one hour and yielded to it the next. He would be described as weak, and lacking the compelling force of a stable disposition. It is also true that the moralization of character is the more complete as the determined nature of impulses is the more evident. Most people would not only resent the imputation of having committed a mean action, they would also resent the likelihood of their committing one. And in common speech, and in fact, the

highest tribute we can pay a man is to say that a certain kind of action is beneath him. We say that we know A would not have committed a theft, but we are quite willing to believe it of B. In each case we make no allowance for the operation of an undetermined will; such doubts as we have being connected with our inability to completely analyze the character in question. But our prognostications are strictly based upon our knowledge of character and upon the conviction that given a certain character and the operation of particular motives, specific action follows with mathematical certainty.

And this, as has previously been pointed out, gives the only reliable basis for the cultivation of character. The whole aim of education, whether it be that received in the home, in the school, or the larger and more protracted education of social life, has the aim and purpose of securing the spontaneous response of a particular action to a particular stimulus, or on the negative side that certain circumstances shall not arouse desires of a socially unwelcome character. The phrase "Patriotism" thus serves to arouse a group of feelings that cluster round the state and social life. "Home" awakens its own groups of domestic and parental feelings. "Duty," again, covers a wider sphere, but involves the same process. By instruction and by training, certain conditions, circumstances, words, or associations are made to call up trains of connected feelings which, culminating in a desire, imperatively demand conduct along a given line. The more complete the education, the stronger the desire; the stronger the desire, the more certain the action.

The more defective the education the less the certainty with which we can count upon specific conduct. The man who acts to-day in one way and to-morrow in another way is not a man of strong desires, so much as he is a man whose desires are undisciplined. The man who acts with uniform certainty is not a man of weak desire, but one whose desires run with strength and swiftness in a uniform direction. And it is a curious feature of indeterministic psychology that it should take as clear evidence of the subordination of desire to "will" the man whose desire is so strong as to preclude hesitation between it and action.

The whole of education, the whole of the discipline of life, is thus based upon the determination of conduct by circumstances and character. If the principle of cause and effect does not fully apply to conduct, all our training is so much waste of time. But it is because we cannot really think of the past not influencing the present, once we bring the two into relation, that we, Determinist and Indeterminist alike, proceed with our deterministic methods of training, and in this instance at least wisdom is justified of her children.

Finally, if the above be granted, can we longer attach meaning to the expression that man forms his own character? Well, if it means that a man has any share in his psychic endowments, or that they being what they are at any given time he could at that time act differently from the way in which he does act, the expression is meaningless. It is absolute nonsense. But in another sense it does convey an important truth. We must, however,

always bear in mind that in speaking of a man's character we are not dealing with two things, but with one thing. The character is the man, the man is the character. Or to be quite accurate, body and mind, physical and psychical qualities together, form the man, and any separation of these is for purposes of analysis and study only. If we say, then, that a man is master of his own character, or that a man may mould his own character, we do not imply the existence of an independent entity moulding or mastering something else. We are saying no more than that every experience carries its resultant into the sum of character. Action generates habit, and habit means a more or less permanent modification of character. What a man is, is the outcome of what he has been, and a perception of this truth no more conflicts with the principles of Determinism as above explained, than a stone being intercepted in its fall down the side of a hill by lodging against a tree is an infraction of the law of gravitation. In this sense, using figurative language, a man may be said to be master of himself. What he does proceeds from himself ; it is the expression of his character, and his doing cuts deeper the grooves of habit, and so makes more certain the performance of similar actions in the future. It is the fact of the motive springing from character which determines the act that makes the man its author. And the knowledge of this supplies him with, not alone the most powerful incentive towards the determination of his own character, but, what is equally important, the only method whereby to fashion the character of others.

VIII.

A PROBLEM IN DETERMINISM.

If human feeling followed logical conviction the discussion of Determinism might, so far as the present writer is concerned, be considered as finished. Ultimately this doubtless occurs ; but in the interim one has to reckon with the play of feeling, fashioned by long-standing conviction, upon convictions that are of recent origin. Thus it happens that many who realise the logical force of arguments similar to those hitherto advanced, find themselves in a state of fearfulness concerning the ultimate effect on human life of a convinced Determinism. The conflict between feeling and conviction that exists in their own minds they naturally ascribe to others, and endow it with a permanency which mature consideration might show to be unwarranted. It would indeed be strange and lamentable if the divorce between feeling and conviction—to adopt a popular classification—was not simply incidental to change, but was also an inexpugnable part of fundamental aspects of human life.

Mr. A. J. Balfour has indeed gone so far as to suggest,* as a theory to meet this phenomenon, that

**International Journal of Ethics*, vol. iv. pp. 421-422.

the immediate consciousness of our actions being determined would be so paralyzing to action, that Nature has by "a process of selective slaughter" made a consciousness of this character a practical impossibility. But it would seem that the fact of a consciousness of determination developing at all affords strong presumptions in favour of the belief that no such selective slaughter is really necessary to the maintenance of vital social relations. Mr. Balfour's argument might have some weight against Fatalism, which says that what is to be will be in despite of all that may be done to prevent its occurrence; but we are on different ground with a theory which makes what *I* do part of the sequence that issues in a particular result.

The problem is put very plainly in the following two quotations. The first is from a private source, written by one who fears the consequences of Determinism on conduct. The writer says:—

> "In a moral crisis, and with the consciousness of a strong tendency in the direction of what is felt to be wrong, is there no danger of this desire gaining further strength and becoming the predominant feeling by accepting Determinism, causing a weakened sense of responsibility, besides providing a convenient excuse for giving way to the lower instead of the higher? Thus in a question of alternatives is it not conceivable that by dwelling on this thought, the agent is resisting possibilities which might otherwise have a different effect had Determinism no advocacy and with a different

> competitive factor to oppose? This, it seems to me, is what the Indeterminist fears, and I think it must be admitted not without some reason."

The second comes from Mr. F. W. Headley's work, *Life and Evolution*. Mr. Headley, after discussing the evolution of mind, and after admitting the impregnable nature of the determinist position, says that notwithstanding the evidence to the contrary we cannot help cherishing the belief that we are in some sense "free," and adds:—

> "For practical purposes what is wanted is not free-will but a working belief in it. When the time for decision and for action comes, a man must feel that he is free to choose or he is lost. And this working belief in free-will, even though the thing itself be proved to be a phantom and an illusion, is the inalienable property of every healthy man."

Both these criticisms might be met by the method of analysing the use made of certain leading words. For example, the Determinist would quite agree that for conduct to be fruitful a man must feel that he is free to choose. But unless his freedom consists in liberty to obey the dictates of his real nature, the term is without significance. The fact of choice, as has been pointed out, is common ground for both Determinist and Indeterminist. The real question is whether the choice itself is determined or not. What a man needs to feel is that his choice is

decisive, and that it is based upon an impartial review of the alternatives as they appear to him. Determinism makes full allowance for this; it is Indeterminism which in denying the application of causality to the will substantially asserts that the whole training of a lifetime may be counteracted by the decision of an uncaused will, and so renders the whole process unintelligible. And as to Determinism causing a weakened sense of responsibility, surely one may fairly argue that the consciousness of the cumulative force of practice may well serve to warn us against yielding to a vicious propensity, and so strengthen the feeling of resistance to it. There could hardly be conceived a stronger incentive to right action, or to struggle against unwholesome desires, than this conviction. Moreover, the practical testimony of those who are convinced Determinists is all in this direction. The fears are expressed by those whose advocacy of Determinism is at best of but a lukewarm description.

But in order that the full weight of the difficulty may be realized let us put the matter in a still more forcible form. Determinism, it is to be remembered, is an attempt to apply to mind and morals that principle of causation which is of universal application in the physical world, and where it has proved itself so fruitful and suggestive. On this principle all that is flows from all that has been in such a way that, given a complete knowledge of the capacities of all the forces in operation at any one time, the world a century hence could be predicted with mathematical accuracy. So likewise with human nature. Human conduct being due to the

interaction of organism with environment, our inability to say what a person will do under given circumstances is no more than an expression of our ignorance of the quantitative and qualitative value of the forces operating. The possibilities of action are co-extensive with the actualities of ignorance. There is no break in the working of causation, no matter what the sphere of existence with which we happen to be dealing.

It is at this point that Determinism lands one in what is apparently an ethical *cul-de-sac*. If all that is, is the necessary result of all that has been, if nothing different from what does occur could occur, what is the meaning of the sense of power over circumstances that we possess? And why urge people to make an effort in this or that direction if everything, including the effort or its absence, is determined? I may flatter myself with the notion that things are better because of some action of mine. But beyond the mere fact that my action is part of the stream of causation, all else is a trick of the imagination. My conduct is, all the time, the result of the co-operation of past conditions with present circumstances. To say that praise or blame of other people's conduct, or approval or disapproval of my own conduct, is itself a determinative force, hardly meets the point. For these, too, are part of the determined order.

It might be urged that the knowledge that by exciting certain feelings others are proportionately weakened operates in the direction of improvement. Quite so; and as a mere description of what occurs the statement is correct. But to the Determinist

there is no "I" that determines which feeling or cluster of feelings shall predominate. "I" am the expression of the succession and co-ordination of mental states; we are still within a closed circle of causation. Whether I am good or bad, wise or unwise, I shall be what I must be, and nothing else; do as I must do, and no more.

This is, I think, putting the Indeterminists' case as strongly as it can be put. How is the Determinist to meet the attack? A common retort is that all this being granted things remain as they were. If the criminal action is determined so is that of the judge, and so no harm is done. We shall go on praising or blaming, punishing or rewarding, doing or not doing, exactly as before, simply because we cannot do otherwise. This, however, while effective as a mere retort, is not very satisfactory as an answer. For it neither explains the sense of power people feel they possess, nor does it meet the criticism raised. On the one hand there is the fact that character does undergo modification, and the conviction that *my* effort does play a part in securing that modification. And with this there goes the feeling—with some—that if everything, mental states and dispositions included, is part of an unbroken and unbreakable order, why delude ourselves with the notion of personal power? Why not let things drift? And on the other hand there is the conviction that scientific Determinism holds the field. The state of mind is there, and it is fairly expressed in the two quotations already given; particularly in Mr. Headley's statement that we ought to act as though Free-Will were a fact, even though

we know it to be otherwise. The difficulty is there, and one must admit that it is not always fairly faced by writers on Determinism. An appeal is made to man's moral sense, and this, while legitimate enough in some connections, is quite irrelevant in this. Or it is said that a knowledge of the causational nature of morals should place people on their guard against encouraging harmful states of mind. This is also good counsel, but it clearly does not touch the point that, whether I encourage harmful or beneficial states of mind, it is all part of the determined order of things.

As an example of what has been said we may take a passage from John Stuart Mill. In his criticism of Sir William Hamiliton, Mill remarks:—

> "The true doctrine of the causation of human actions maintains . . . that not only our conduct, but our character, is, in part, amenable to our will; that we can by employing the proper means, improve our character; and that if our character is such that while it remains what it is, it necessitates us to do wrong, it will be just to apply motives which will necessitate us to strive for its improvement, and so emancipate ourselves from the other necessity; in other words, we are under a moral obligation to seek the improvement of our moral character."

Admirable as is this passage it is clearly no reply to the criticism that whether we seek moral improvement or not, either course is as much necessitated as

is the character that needs improving. To give a real relevance to this passage we should have to assume the existence of an ego outside the stream of causation deciding at what precise point it should exert a determining influence. That so clear a thinker as Mill should have overlooked this gives point to what has been said as to writers on Determinism having failed to squarely face the issue.

A more valid reply to Mr. Headley's position would be that so long as we believe a theory to be sound there is no real gain in acting as though we were convinced otherwise. Granting that an illusion may have its uses, it can only be of service so long as we do not know it to be an illusion. A mirage of cool trees and sparkling pools may inspire tired travellers in a desert to renewed efforts of locomotion. But if they *know* it to be a mirage it only serves to discourage effort. And once we believe in Determinism, our right course, and our only profitable course, is to face all the issues as courageously as may be. Not that a correct reading of Determinism leads to our sitting with folded hands lacking the spirit to strive for better things.

It may be that certain people so read Determinism, but one cannot reasonably hold a theory responsible for every misreading of it that exists. Theologians in particular would be in a very uncomfortable position if this rule were adopted. A theory is responsible for such conclusions or consequences as are logically deducible therefrom, but no more. And what we are now concerned with is, first, will Determinism, properly understood, really have the effect

feared ; and, second, is it possible for Determinism to account adequately for the belief that it is possible to modify other people's character, and in so doing modify our own? In Mill's words, can we exchange the necessity to do wrong for the necessity to do right? I believe that a satisfactory reply can be given to both questions

In the first place we have to get rid of the overpowering influence of an atomistic psychology. A very little study of works on psychology—particularly of the more orthodox schools—is enough to show that the social medium as a factor determining man's mental nature has been either ignored, or given a quite subordinate position. Because in studying the mental qualities of man we are necessarily dealing with an individual brain, it has been assumed that mental phenomena may be explained with no more than a casual reference to anything beyond the individual organism. This assumption may be sound so long as we are dealing with mind as the function of definitely localized organs, or if we are merely describing mental phenomena. It is when we pass to the contents of the mind, and study the significance of mental states, or enquire how they came into existence, that we find the atomistic psychology breaking down, and we find ourselves compelled to deal with mind as a psycho-sociologic phenomenon, with its relation to the social medium. Then we discover that it is man's social relationships, the innumerable generations of reaction between individual organisms and the social medium, which supply the key to problems that are otherwise insoluble.

It has already been pointed out that the whole significance of morality is social. If we restrict ourselves to the individual no adequate explanation can be given of such qualities as sympathy, honesty, truthfulness, chastity, kindness, etc. Separate it in thought from the social medium and morality becomes meaningless. Properly studied, psychology yields much the same result. When we get beyond the apprehension of such fundamental qualities as time and space, heat and cold, colour and sound, the contour of man's mind, so to speak, is a social product. His feelings and impulses imply a social medium as surely as does morality. From this point of view the phrase "Social sense" is no mere figure of speech ; it is the expression of a pregnant truth, the statement of something as real as any scientific law with which we are acquainted.

For the essence of a scientific law is the expression of a relation. The law of gravitation, for instance, formulates the relations existing between particles of matter. If there existed but one particle of matter in the universe gravitation would be a meaningless term. Introduce a second particle, and a relation is established between the two, and the material for a scientific "law" created. In the same way a description of individual human qualities is fundamentally a statement of the relations existing between individuals living in groups ; and any attempt to understand human nature without considering these relations is as certainly foredoomed to failure as would be the attempt to study a particle of matter apart from the operation of all known forces. The individual as he exists to-day

is not something that exists apart from the social forces ; he is an expression, an epitome, of all their past and present operations. The really essential thing in the study of human nature is not so much the discrete individual A or B, but the relations existing between A and B. It is these which make each end of the term what it is—determines the individual's language, feelings, thoughts, and character.

It is along these lines that we have to look for an explanation of the feeling that we can initiate a reform in character, and of a sense of power in determining events. We start with a sense of power over the course of events—which is interpreted as the equivalent of our ability to initiate absolutely a change in our own character or in that of others. But a little reflection convinces us—particularly if we call ourselves Determinists—that this interpretation is quite erroneous. An absolute beginning is no more conceivable in the mental or moral sphere than it is in the physical world. The sum of all that is is the product of all that has been, and in this, desires, feelings, dispositions are included no less than physical properties. Now, curiously enough, the conviction that an absolute change in character can be initiated exists with much greater strength in regard to oneself than it does with regard to others. It is easier to observe others than to analyze one's own mental states, with the result that most people can more readily realize that what others do is the product of their heredity and their environment than they can realize it in their own case. Of course,

reflection shows that the same principle applies in both directions, but we are here dealing with moods rather than with carefully reasoned out convictions. And, generally speaking, while we *feel* ourselves masters of our own fate, we only suspect a similar strength in others. But each one realizes, and with increasing vividness, the power he possesses in modifying other people's character by a change of circumstances. We see this illustrated by the increased emphasis placed upon the importance of better sanitation, better housing, better conditions of labour, and of an improved education. More from observing others than by studying ourselves we see how modifiable a thing human nature is. We see how character is modified by an alteration of the material environment, and we also note our own individual function as a determinative influence in effecting this modification.

Now I quite fail to see that there is in this sense of power over circumstances anything more than a recognition of our own efforts as part of the determinative sequence. The added factor to the general causative series is the consciousness of man himself. We are conscious, more or less clearly, of our place in the sequence ; we are able to recognize and study our relations to past and present events, and our probable relation to future ones. We see ourselves as so many efficient causes of those social reactions that go to make up a science of sociology, and it is this which gives us a sense of *power* of determining events. I say "power" because "freedom" is an altogether different thing. The question of whether we are

free to determine events is, as I have shown, meaningless when applied to scientific matters. But the question of whether or not we have the *power* of determining events may be answered in the affirmative—an answer not in the least affected by the belief that this power is strictly conditioned by past and present circumstances. The sense of power is real, and it expresses a fact, even though the fact be an inevitable one. We are all shapers of each other's character, moulders of each other's destiny. The recognition of our power to act in this relation is not contrary to Determinism, Determinism implies it. It is this which gives a real meaning to the expression "social sense." For the social sense can have no other meaning or value than as a recognition of the action of one individual upon another, which, as in the case of a chemical compound, results in the production of something that is not given by the mere sum of individual qualities.

So, too, do we get by this method a higher meaning to the word "freedom." In an earlier part of this essay it was pointed out that "freedom" was of social origin and application. Its essential meaning is liberty to carry out the impulses of one's nature unrestricted by the coercive action of one's fellows. But there is a higher and a more positive meaning than this. Man is a social animal; his character is a social product. The purely human qualities not only lose their value when divorced from social relationships, it is these relationships that provide the only medium for their activity. To say that a person

is free to express moral qualities in the absence of his fellows is meaningless, since it is only in their presence that the manifestation of them is possible. It is the intercourse of man with man that gives to each whatever freedom he possesses. The restraints imposed upon each member of a society in the interests of all are not a curtailing of human freedom but the condition of its realization. To chafe against them is, to use Kant's famous illustration, as unreasonable as a bird's revolt against the opposing medium or atmosphere, in ignorance of the fact that it is this opposition which makes flight possible. The only genuine freedom that man can know and enjoy is that provided by social life. Human freedom has its origin in social relationships, and to these we are ultimately driven to discover its meaning and significance.

So far, then, the sense of power in controlling events which each possesses presents no insuperable difficulty to a theory of Determinism. Only one other point remains on which to say a word, and that is whether a conviction of the causative character of human action would lead to a weakening of effort or to moral depression. Why should it have this effect? It is curious that those who fear this result seem to have only in mind the tendencies to wrongdoing. But if it operates at all it must operate in all directions, and this would certainly strengthen good resolutions as well as bad ones. And even though no more were to be said, this would justify the assertion that merit and demerit would remain unaffected, and that any harm done in one direction would be compensated

by good done in another. But another important consideration is to be added. This is that while a consciousness of the power of habit acts as a retarding influence on wrongdoing, it has an accelerating influence in the reverse direction—that is, unless we assume a character acting with the deliberate intention of cultivating an evil disposition. Besides, the really vicious characters are not usually given to reflecting upon the origin and nature of their desires, and are therefore quite unaffected by any theory of volition; while those who are given to such reflection are not usually of a vicious disposition. We are really crediting the vicious with a degree of intelligence and reflective power quite unwarranted by the facts of the case.

Finally, the criticism with which I have been dealing takes a too purely intellectual view of conduct. It does not allow for the operation of sympathy, or for the power of social reaction. And these are not only real, they are of vital importance when we are dealing with human nature. For man cannot, even if he would, remain purely passive. The power of sympathy, the desire for social intercourse, the invincible feeling that in some way he is vitally concerned with the well-being of the society to which he belongs, these are always in operation, even though their degree of intensity varies with different individuals. We cannot possibly isolate man in considering conduct, because his whole nature has been moulded by social intercourse, and craves continuously for social approval. And it is such feelings that are powerful agents in the immediate determination of conduct. The

mental perception of the causes and conditions of conduct are feeble by comparison and can only operate with relative slowness. And in their operation they are all the time checked and modified by the fundamental requirements of the social structure.

IX.

ENVIRONMENT.

IN the course of the foregoing pages we have made frequent reference to "environment," without the word being precisely described or defined. The subject was of too great importance to be dismissed with a bald definition, and to have dealt with it earlier at suitable length might have diverted attention from the main argument. But so much turns on a correct understanding of the word "environment" that a discussion of Determinism would be incomplete that failed to fix its meaning with a fair degree of accuracy.

A very casual study of anti-deterministic literature is enough to show that a great deal of the opposition to a scientific interpretation of human conduct has its origin in a quite wrong conception of what the determinist has in mind when he speaks of the part played by the environment in the determination of conduct. Even writings ostensibly deterministic in aim have not been free from blame in their use of the word. Thus on the one hand we find it said that man is a creature of his environment, and by "environment" we are to understand, by implication, only the material forces, which are assumed to somehow drive man hither and thither in much the same way as a tennis ball is driven this way or that by the player.

Against this there has been a natural and, let it be said, a justifiable reaction. Expressed in this way it was felt that man was not at the mercy of his surroundings. It was felt that, whatever be its nature the organism does exert some influence over environmental forces, and that it is not a merely passive register of their operations. Neither of these views expresses the whole truth. It may be that each expresses *a* truth, and it is still more probable, as is the case with some terms already examined, that the confusion arises from a mis-use of the language employed.

To-day we are all familiar with the dictum that the maintenance of life is a question of adaptation to environment—a truth that is equally applicable to ideas and institutions. But the general truth admitted, there is next required a consideration of its application to the particular subject in hand, and in connection with our present topic some attention must be paid both to the nature of the organism and of the environment with which we are dealing. We then discover that not alone are we dealing with an organism which is extremely plastic in its nature, but that the environment may also vary within very wide limits. On the one side, and in relation to man, we may be dealing with an environment that is mainly physical in character, or it may be a combination of physical conditions and biological forces, or, yet again, it may be predominantly psychological in its nature. And, on the other hand, the reaction of the organism on the environment may vary from extreme feebleness to an almost overpowering determination. We may,

indeed, anticipate our argument by saying that one of the chief features of human progress is the gradual subordination of the material environment to the psychologic powers of man.

If, now, we contrast the environment of an uncivilized with that of a civilized people the difference is striking. The environment of an uncivilized race will consist of the immediate physical surroundings, the animals that are hunted for sport or killed for food, and a comparatively meagre stock of customs and traditions. The environment of a modern European will add to the physical surroundings an enormously enlarged mass of social traditions and customs, an extensive literature, contact with numerous other societies in various stages of culture, and relations, more or less obscure, to a vast literary and social past. The environment thus includes not merely the living, but also the dead. Roman law, Greek philosophy, Eastern religious ideas, etc., all affect the twentieth century European. It would require a lengthy essay to enumerate all the influences that dominate the life of a particular people of to-day, but enough has been said to illustrate the truth that we must use the term "environment" so as to include *all* that affects the organism. And when this is done it soon becomes clear that by the very growth of humanity the influence of the physical portion of the environment becomes of relatively less importance with the progress of the race—it is the subordination of the physical environment that is the principal condition of the advance of civilization.

But even when our conception of the meaning of environment has been thus enlarged, we need to be on our guard against misconception from another side. For the environment is only one factor in the problem; the organism is another, and the relative importance of the two is a matter of vital significance. We may still make the mistake of treating the environment as active and the organism as passive. This would be a similar mistake to that which is made when morality and religion are treated as being no more than a reflection of economic conditions. The action of the environment is given a place of first importance, while the reaction of the organism on its environment is treated as a negligible quantity. Historically this may be taken as a reaction against the extreme spiritualistic view which, in upholding, a theory of Free-Will made no allowance for the influence of the surroundings. An extreme view in one direction usually sets up an extreme view by way of opposition, and it must be confessed that in social philosophy the power of the environment has often been made omnipotent. The medium has been presented as active and the organism as passive. Different results occur because the susceptibilities of organisms vary. Good or bad influences affect individuals differently for much the same reason that soils differ in their capacity for absorbing water.

From the scientific and the philosophic side this conception derived a certain adventitious strength. In the first place there was the now generally discarded psychology which taught that the individual

mind was as a sheet of blank paper on which experience inscribed its lessons. And in the second place the growth of biological science brought out with great distinctness the influence of the environment on organic life. It was very plain that the quality and quantity of the food supply, the action of air and light, and other purely environmental forces exercised an important influence. In the plant world it was seen how much could be effected by a mere change of habitat. In the animal world markings and structure seemed to have an obvious reference to the nature of the environment. It, therefore, seemed nothing but a logical inference to extend the same reasoning to man, and treat not only his structure but his mental capacities as being the outcome of the same kind of correspondence.

But a too rigid application of biological principles lands one in error. Society is more than a mere biological group, and no reasoning that proceeds on the assumption that it is no more than that can avoid confusion. And we certainly cannot square the facts with a theory which treats the human organism as passive under the operation of environmental forces The conviction that man plays a positive part in life is general, powerful, and, I think, justifiable. But if what *I* do is at any time the product of the environmental forces, physical and other, there does not seem any room for *me* as an active participant. And the facts seem to demand that the individual should appear in some capacity other than that of representing the total in an environmental calculation. This would leave

man with no other function than that of a billiard ball pushed over a table by rival players. Given the force exerted by the player, added to the size, weight, and position of the ball, and the product of the combination gives us the correct answer. But this kind of calculation will not do in the case of man. Here we must allow, in addition to external influences, the positive action of man on his surroundings. The conception of the organism as a plexus of forces capable of this reaction is, indeed, vital to our conception of a living being. Granted that in either case, that of the billiard ball and that of the man, the result expresses the exact sum of all the forces acting at the time, there still remains an important distinction in the two cases. Whether the billiard ball is struck by a professional player or by an amateur, provided it be struck in a particular way the result is in both cases identical. An identity of result is produced by an identity of external conditions.

With the human organism—with, in fact, any organism—this rule does not apply. In any two cases the external factors may be identical, but the results may be entirely different. A temptation that leaves one unaffected may prove overpowering with another. Exactly the same conditions of food, occupation, residence, and social position may co-exist with entirely different effects on the organism. These differences will be manifested from the earliest years and are a direct consequence of the positive reaction of the organism on its environment, a reaction that is more profound in the case of man than in that of any other animal.

To put the matter briefly. In the case of the billiard player the ball remains a constant factor in a problem in which external conditions represent a variant. In the case of man and his environment we are dealing with two sets of factors, neither of which is constant and one of which—the human one —varies enormously. And the reaction of man on his environment becomes so great as to result in its practical transformation.

It may, of course, be urged that all this is covered and allowed for by heredity. This may be so, but I am arguing against those who while recognizing heredity fail to make adequate allowance for its operations. Or it may be said that "environment" covers all forces, including heredity. But in that case the distinction between organism and environment is useless—in fact, it disappears. If, however, the distinction between the two is retained, our theorizing must give full appreciation to both. And in that case we must not fail to allow for the transforming power of man over his surroundings. Nor must we overlook another and a very vital fact, that in a large measure the environment to which civilised mankind must adapt itself is largely a thing of human creation.

Viewed as merely external circumstances, the physical environment of man remains constant. At any rate, such changes as do take place occur with such slowness that for generations we may safely deal with them as unchanged. The dissipation of the heat of the earth may be a fact, but no one takes this into account in dealing with the probabilities of human life during the next few generations. On the

other hand, the organism represents the cumulative, and consequently, ever-changing power of human nature, and it is this that gives us the central fact of human civilization. Whether acquired characters be inherited or not may be still an open question, but in any case there is no denying that capacity is heritable, and natural selection will move along the line of favouring the survival of that capacity which is most serviceable. And how does increasing capacity express itself? It can do so only in the direction of giving man a greater ability to control and mould to his own uses the material environment in which he is placed. Looking at the course of social evolution, we see this increased and increasing capacity expressed in art, industries, inventions, etc., all of which mean in effect a transformation of the material surroundings and their subjugation to the needs of man. These inventions, etc., not only involve a transformation of the existing environment; they also mean the creating of a new environment for succeeding generations. Each mechanical invention, for example, is dependent upon the inventions and discoveries that have preceded it, and to that extent it is dependent upon the environment. But each invention places a new power in the hands of man, and so enables him to still further modify and control his surroundings. Human heredity is thus expressed in capacity as represented by a definite organic structure. This is one factor in the phenomenon of social evolution. The other factor is the environment in which the organism is placed and to which it responds. The two factors, organism and environment, remain

constant throughout the animal world. It is when we come to deal with human society specifically, that we find a radical change in the nature of the environment to be considered. Granted that some influence must always be exerted by the purely material conditions, the fact remains that they become relatively less powerful with the advance of civilization. The development of agriculture, the invention of weapons and tools, the discovery of the nature of natural forces, all help to give the developing human a greater measure of control over both the physical and organic portion of his environment, and to manifest a measure of independence concerning them.

But the supreme and peculiar feature of human society is the creation of a new medium to which the individual must adapt himself. By means of language and writing the knowledge and experience gained by one generation are transmitted to its successors. The human intellect elaborates definite theories concerning the universe of which it forms a part. These theories and beliefs form and fashion institutions that are transmitted from generation to generation. Language stereotypes tradition and slowly creates a literature. In this way a new medium is created which is psychological in character, and ultimately dominates life.

When a dog is about to rest it often tramps round and round the spot on which it is to recline. Naturalists explain this as the survival of an instinct which in the wild dog served the useful function of guarding it against the presence of harmful creatures hidden in the grass. The domesticated

dog is here exhibiting an instinct that belongs to a past condition of life. But man has few instincts —fewer perhaps than any other animal. In their stead he has a greater plasticity of nature, and a more educable intelligence. And it is in the exercise of this educable organization that the psychological medium as expressed in art, literature, and inventions, plays its part for good and ill. So soon as he is able to understand, the individual finds himself surrounded by ideas concerning home, the State, the monarchy, the Church, and a thousand and one other things. He is brought into relation with a vast literature, and also with the play of myriads of minds similar to his own. Henceforth, it is this environment with which he has chiefly to reckon in terms of either harmony or conflict. He can no more escape it than he can dispense with the atmosphere. It is part and parcel of himself. Without it he ceases to be himself; for if we cut away from man all that this psychological heredity gives him he ceases to be man as we understand the term. He becomes a mere animated object.

Finally, we have to note that this psychological environment is cumulative in character as being is all powerful in its influence. By its own unceasing activity humanity is continually triumphing over the difficulties of its material environment and adding to the complexity and power of its mental one. Inevitably the environment thus becomes more psychic in character and more powerful in its operations. We may overcome the difficulties of climate, poor soil, geographical position, etc., but it is impossible to ignore the great and growing

pressure of this past mental life of the race. It defies all attempts at material coercion, and gradually transforms a material medium into what is substantially a psychological one. Man cannot escape the domination of his own mental life. Its unfettered exercise supplies the only freedom he is capable of realising, as it constitutes the source of his influence as a link in the causative process of determining his own destiny and moulding that of his successors.

CPSIA information can be obtained
at www.ICGtesting.com
Printed in the USA
LVOW10s0139100118
562500LV00009BA/243/P

Literary Licensing

www.LiteraryLicensing.com

ISBN 9781258128814

9 781258 128814

04-AWX-173

Cover design: GBRCreations.com

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Theism or Atheism, by Chapman Cohen

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with
almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or
re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included
with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

Title: Theism or Atheism
       The Great Alternative

Author: Chapman Cohen

Release Date: May 2, 2008 [EBook #25291]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THEISM OR ATHEISM ***

Produced by Marilynda Fraser-Cunliffe, Martin Pettit and
the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at
http://www.pgdp.net

THEISM OR ATHEISM

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE

By CHAPMAN COHEN

THE PIONEER PRESS,

61, Farringdon Street,
----EC4----

1921.

Contents.

Part I.

AN EXAMINATION OF THEISM.

		PAGE
Chapter I.	What is God?	9
Chapter II.	The Origin of the Idea of God	20
Chapter III.	Have we a Religious Sense?	37
Chapter IV.	The Argument from Existence	49
Chapter V.	The Argument from Causation	59
Chapter VI.	The Argument from Design	69
Chapter VII.	The Disharmonies of Nature	85
Chapter VIII.	God and Evolution	94
Chapter IX.	The Problem of Pain	110

Part II.

SUBSTITUTES FOR ATHEISM.

Chapter X. A Question of Prejudice 131

Chapter XI. What is Atheism? 138

Chapter XII. Spencer and the Unknowable 151

Chapter XIII. Agnosticism 169

Chapter XIV. Atheism and Morals 181

Chapter XV. Atheism Inevitable 194

PREFACE.

Shrouded in the cloak of philosophy, the question of the existence of God continues to attract attention, and, I may add, to command more respect than it deserves. For it is only by a subterfuge that it assumes the rank of philosophy. "God" enters into philosophy only when it is beginning to lose caste in its proper home, and then in its new environment it undergoes such a transformation as to contain very little likeness to its former, and proper, self. It disowns its parentage and claims another origin, and, like so many genealogists devising pedigrees for the parvenu, certain philosophers attempt to map out for the newcomer an ancestry to which he can establish no valid claim. Nothing would, indeed, surprise the ancestor more than to be brought face to face with his descendant. He would not be more astonished than would the ancient Eohippus on meeting with a modern dray-horse. In anthropology or history the idea of God may fairly claim a place, but it has no place in philosophy on any sensible meaning of the word.

The consequence of this transference of the idea of God to the sphere of philosophy is the curious position that the God in which people believe is not the God whose existence is made the product of an argument, and the God of the argument is not the God of belief. The theory and the fact have no more likeness to each other than a chestnut horse has to a horse-chestnut. A fallacy is perpetuated by appealing to a fact, but the fact immediately discredits the fallacy by disowning it in practice. The grounds upon which the belief in God is supposed to rest, the reasoning from which it springs, are seen to follow the belief instead of preceding it. The roots are in the air, and on closer inspection are seen to be artificial adornments, so many imitations that have been hung there for the purpose of imposing on near-sighted or careless observers.

The purpose of the following pages is to make clear the nature of this alliance and to expose the real character of what we are asked to worship. There are, of course, many on whose ears any amount of reasoning will fall without effect. To that class this book will not appeal; it may be questioned whether many will even read it. They will go on professing the belief they have always professed, and taking pride in the fact that they have an intellect which is superior to proof, and which disdains evidence when it runs contrary to "my belief." Others will, I expect, complain that the treatment of so solemn a subject is not "reverent" enough. But why _any_ subject should be treated reverently, as a condition of examination, is more than I have ever been able to discover. It is asking the inquirer to commence his investigation with a half-promise to find something good in what he is about to examine. Whether a thing is worthy of reverence or not is a conclusion that must follow investigation, not precede it. And one does not observe any particular reverence shown by the religious person towards those beliefs in which he does not happen to believe.

But there are some who will read thoughtfully an examination of so old a subject as Theism, and it is to those that these pages are addressed. One cannot hope to say anything that is strikingly new on so well worn a

subject as the existence of God, but there are many who will read an old subject when presented in a new work, and even then there is also the possibility of presenting an old topic in a slightly new form. And I think these will find the main lines of the defence set up by the Goddite dealt with in a manner that should at least make the point at issue clear.

Finally, it is one aim of this book to press home the point that the logical issue is between Theism and Atheism. That there is no logical halting place between the two, and that any attempt to call a halt is little more than a concession to a desire for mental or social convenience, seems to me as clear as anything can well be. And there is really nothing gained, ultimately, by the halt. Disinclination on the part of the non-Theist to push the issue to its logical conclusion is treated by the Theist as inability to do so, and is used as an argument in support of his own belief. In matters of the intellect, compromise is almost always a dangerous policy. It heartens one's enemies and disheartens one's friends. And there is really no adequate reason why those who have given up belief in deity should continue to treat this master superstition of the ages as though it were one of our most valuable inheritances, to be surrendered with lowered heads and sinking hearts. We who know both sides know that in giving up the belief in deity we have lost nothing of value, nothing that need cause us a single regret. And on that point we certainly can speak with authority; for we have been where the Theist is, he has not been where we are. Many of us know quite well all that is meant by the fear and trembling with which the believer looks upon a world without God. And we know how idle the fear is--as idle as a child's fear of the dark. What the world is like _with_ God, there is all the experience of history to inform us; and it would indeed be strange if love and brotherhood, armed with the weapons that science has given us, could not produce a better human society than has ever existed under the dominion of the Gods.

Part I.

AN EXAMINATION OF THEISM.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS GOD?

Soon after that famous Atheist, Charles Bradlaugh, entered the House of Commons, it is said that a fellow member approached him with the remark, "Good God, Bradlaugh, what does it matter whether there is a God or not?" Bradlaugh's answer is not recorded, but one is impelled to open the present examination of the belief in God, by putting the same question in another form. Is the belief in God, as we are so often assured, one of the most important questions that can engage the attention of man? Under certain conditions one can conceive a rational answer in the affirmative. Where the mental and social conditions are such that men seriously believe the incidence of natural forces on mankind to be determined by the direct action of "God," one can appreciate right belief concerning him being treated as of first rate importance. In such circumstances wrong ideas are the equivalent of disaster. But we are not in that condition to-day. It is, indeed, common ground with all educated men and women that natural happenings are independent of divine control to at least the extent that natural forces affect all alike, and without the least reference to religious beliefs. Fire burns and water drowns, foods sustain and poisons kill, no matter what our opinions on theology may be. In an earthquake or a war there is no observable relation between casualties and religious opinions. We are, in fact, told by theologians that it is folly to expect that there should be. A particular providence is no longer in fashion; God, we are told, works only through general laws, and that is only another way of saying that our opinions about God have no direct or observable influence on our well-being. It is a tacit admission that human welfare depends upon our knowledge and manipulation of the forces by which we

are surrounded. There _may_ be a God behind these forces, but that neither determines the extent of our knowledge of them or our power to manipulate them. The belief in God becomes a matter of, at best, secondary importance, and quite probably of no importance whatever.

But if that be so why bother about the belief? Is that not a reason for leaving it alone and turning our attention to other matters? The answer to that is that the belief in God is not of so detached a character as this advice assumes. In the course of ages the belief in God has acquired associations that give it the character of a highly obstructive force. It has become so entangled with inculcated notions of right and wrong that it is everywhere used as a buttress for institutions which have either outgrown their utility, or are in need of serious modification in the interests of the race. The opposition encountered in any attempt to deal with marriage, divorce, or education, are examples of the way in which religious ideas are permitted to interfere with subjects that should be treated solely from the standpoint of social utility. The course of human development has been such that religion has hitherto occupied a commanding position in relation to social laws and customs, with the result that it is often found difficult to improve either until the obstructive influence of religious beliefs has been dealt with.

It is not, then, because I believe the question of the existence of God to be of intrinsic importance that an examination of its validity is here undertaken. Its importance to-day is of a purely contingent character. The valid ground for now discussing its truth is that it is at present allowed to obstruct the practical conduct of life. And under similar circumstances it would be important to investigate the historical accuracy of Old Mother Hubbard or Jack and the Beanstalk. Any belief, no matter what its nature, must be dealt with as a fact of some social importance, so long as it is believed by large numbers to be essential to the right ordering of life. Whether true or false, beliefs are facts--mental and social facts, and the scheme of things which leaves them out of account is making a blunder of the most serious kind.

Certainly, conditions were never before so favourable for the delivery of a considered judgment on the question of the belief in God. On the one side we have from natural science an account of the universe which rules the operations of deity out of court. And on the other side we have a knowledge of the mode of origin of the belief which should leave us in no doubt as to its real value. We hope to show later that the question of origin is really decisive; that in reaching conclusions concerning the origin of the god-idea we are passing judgment as to its value. That the masters of this form of investigation have not usually, and in so many words, pushed their researches to their logical conclusions is no reason why we should refrain from doing so. Facts are in themselves of no great value. It is the conclusions to which they point that are the important things.

If the conclusions to which we refer are sound, then the whole basis of theism crumbles away. If we are to regard the god-idea as an evolution which began in misunderstandings of nature that were rooted in the ignorance of primitive man, it would seem clear that no matter how refined or developed the idea may become, it can rest on no other or sounder basis than that which is presented to us in the psychology of primitive man. Each stage of theistic belief grows out of the preceding stage, and if it can be shown that the beginning of this evolution arose in a huge blunder I quite fail to see how any subsequent development can convert this unmistakable blunder into a demonstrable truth. To take a case in point. When it was shown that so far as witchcraft rested on observed facts these could be explained on grounds other than those of the malevolent activities of certain old women, the belief in witchcraft was not "purified," neither did it advance to any so-called higher stage; it was simply abandoned as a useless and mischievous explanation of facts that could be otherwise accounted for. Are we logically justified in dealing with the belief in God on any other principle? We cannot logically discard the world of the savage and still retain his interpretation of it. If the grounds upon which the savage constructed his theory of the world, and from which grew all the ghosts and gods with which he believed himself to be surrounded, if these grounds are false, how can we still keep in substance to conclusions that are admittedly based on false premises? We can say with tolerable certainty that had primitive man known what we know about nature the gods would

never have been born. Civilised man does not discover gods, he discards them. It was a profound remark of Feurbach's, that religion is ultimately anthropology, and it is anthropology that gives to all forms of theism the death blow.

In our own time, at least, it is not difficult to see that the word God retains its influence with many because of the indefinite manner in which it is used. It is never easy to say what a person has in his mind when he uses the word. In most cases one would be safe in saying that nothing at all is meant. It is just one of those "blessed" words where the comfort felt in their use is proportionate to the lack of definite meaning that accompanies them. A frank confession of ignorance is something that most people heartily dislike, and where problems are persistent and difficult of solution what most people are in search of is a narcotic. That "God" is one of the most popular of narcotics will be denied by none who study the psychology of the average man or woman.

When not used as a narcotic, "God" is brought into an argument as though it stood for a term which carried a well defined and well understood meaning. In work after work dealing with theism one looks in vain for some definition of "God." All that one can do is to gather the author's meaning from the course of his argument, and that is not always an easy task. The truth is, of course, that instead of the word carrying with it a generally understood meaning there is no word that is more loosely used or which carries a greater variety of meanings. Its connotations are endless, and range from the aggressively man-like deity of the primitive savage up--or down--to the abstract force of the mathematical physicist and the shadowy "Absolute" of the theologising metaphysician. The consequence of this is to find commonly that while it is one kind of a god that is being set up in argument, it is really another god that is being defended and even believed in. When we find people talking of entering into communion with God, or praying to God, it is quite certain they do not conceive him as a mere mathematical abstraction, or as a mere symbol of an unknown force. It is impossible to conceive any sane man or woman extracting comfort from praying or talking to a god who could not think, or feel, or hear. And if he possesses qualities that the religious attitude implies, we endow him with all the attributes of personality, and, be it noted, of human personality. Either one God is believed in in fact while another is established in theory, or an elaborate argument is presented which serves no other purpose than a disguise for the fact that there is no genuine belief left.

An example of the misleading way in which words are used is supplied by Sir Oliver Lodge, who for a man of science shows an amazing capacity for making use of unscientific language. In his "Man and the Universe," discussing the attributes of deity, he says, "Let no worthy attribute be denied to the deity. In anthropomorphism there are many errors, but there is one truth. Whatever worthy attributes belong to man, be it personality or any other, its existence in the universe is thereby admitted; it belongs to the all." Putting on one side the fallacy involved in speaking of attributes as though they were good or bad in themselves, one wonders why Sir Oliver limits this inference to the "worthy" attributes? Unworthy attributes are as real as worthy ones. If honesty exists so does dishonesty. Kindness is as real as cruelty. And if we must credit the deity with possessing all the good attributes, to whom must we credit the bad ones? A little later Sir Oliver does admit that we must credit the deity with the bad attributes also, but adds that they are dying out. But as they are _part_ of the deity, their decay must mean that the deity is also undergoing a process of change, of education, and is as much subject to the law of growth as we are. Surely that is not what people mean when they speak about God. A god who is only a part of the cosmic process ceases to be a god in any reasonable sense of the term.

Professor Mellone, in his "God and the World," says that the word God "becomes a name for the infinite system of law regarded as a whole" (p. 122). If that were really all that was meant by the word the matter would not be worth discussing. "God" as a symbol of a generalisation is a mere name, and as such is as good as any other name. But, again, it is plain that people mean more than that when they speak about God. If God is a name for universal law, let any really religious man try the plan of substituting in his prayers and in his thoughts the phrase "Universal Law" for "God," and then see how long he will retain his religion. As Mr. Balfour points out ("Theism and Humanism," p. 20), the god of

religion and the god of philosophy represent two distinct beings, and it is hard to see how the two can be fused into one. The plain truth is that it is impossible to now make the existence of the god of religion reasonable, and the plan adopted is that of arguing for the existence of something about which there is often no dispute, and then introducing as the product of the argument something that has never been argued for at all. It is the philosophic analogue of the hat and omelette trick.

In this connection some well considered words of Sir James Frazer are well worth noting. He says:--

> By a god I understand a superhuman and supernatural being, of a spiritual and personal nature, who controls the world or some part of it on the whole for good, and who is endowed with intellectual faculties, moral feelings, and active powers, which we can only conceive on the analogy of human faculties, feelings, and activities, though we are bound to suppose that in the divine nature they exist in an infinitely higher degree, than the corresponding faculties, feelings, and activities of man. In short, by a God I mean a beneficent supernatural spirit, the ruler of the world or of some part of it, who resembles man in nature though he excels him in knowledge, goodness, and power. This is, I think, the sense in which the ordinary man speaks of a God, and I believe that he is right in so doing. I am aware that it has been not unusual, especially of late years, to apply the name of God to very different conceptions, to empty it of all implications of personality, and to reduce it to signifying something very large and very vague, such as the Infinite or the Absolute (whatever these hard words may signify) the great First Cause, the Universal Substance, the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being, and so forth. Now, without expressing opinion as to the truth or falsehood of the views implied by such applications of the name of God, I cannot but regard them as illegitimate extensions of the term, in short, an abuse of language, and I venture to protest against it in the interest, not only of verbal accuracy, but of clear thinking, because it is apt to conceal from ourselves and others a real and very important change of thought; in particular it may lead many to imagine that the persons who use the name of God in one or other of these extended senses retain theological opinions which they may in fact have long abandoned. Thus the misuse of the name of God may resemble the stratagem in war of putting up dummies to make an enemy imagine that a fort is still held long after it has been abandoned by the garrison. (_The Belief in Immortality_; pp. 9-10. Vol. I.).

This expression of opinion from an authoritative quarter is very much needed. The fear of public opinion displayed by many "advanced" thinkers is in this country one of the greatest obstacles to rapid advance. It is simply deplorable to observe the trouble taken by some to coin new names, or the illegitimate use made of old ones, for no other discoverable reason than that of disguising from the world the fact that the orthodox beliefs are no longer held. The need of to-day is not so much liberal thought as strong and courageous thought; and one would cheerfully hand back to orthodoxy a fairly large parcel of a certain type of heretical thinker in exchange for a single one who used plain language to express clear convictions.

What is it that the mass of believers have in their minds when they speak of God? There can be no doubt but that what the plain man has always understood by "God" is a person. Every book of religious devotion implies this; every prayer that is offered takes it for granted that _someone_ will listen, and probably grant the petition. God is personal, God is just, God is beneficent, God is intelligent, these are conceptions that are bound up with all the religions of the world, and without which they would lack both significance and value. A very acute theistic writer, Mr. W. H. Mallock, puts this quite plainly when he says that the God of theism "is represented as revealing himself in the universe, firstly, as the mind which animates and moves everything, secondly, as a purposing mind which is infinitely wise and powerful, and has created a perfect universe with a view to some perfect end; and lastly, as an ethical mind which out of all the things created by it,

has selected men as the object of a preferential love. A personality which thinks and wills and loves and hates. That is what mankind in the mass have always meant by 'God.'"

Indeed, any other kind of God is inconceivable. Whatever may be the metaphysical subtleties employed, we come ultimately to that. It is this, the older and the vital conception that is being fought for. The arguments for any other kind of existence are mere subterfuges. The pleas for an "Absolute" or an "Unconditioned" are only used to buttress the older conception, and never till the older one has lost its force. The unconditioned God is argued for only that it may serve as the basis for the belief in a personal one. What is proved is not what is asked for; what is asked for is not what is proved. No wonder that so eminent a writer as Mr. F. H. Bradley feels constrained to give these verbalistic thimble riggers a smart rap over the knuckles, as in the following passage:--

> Most of those who insist on the "personality of God" are intellectually dishonest. They desire one conclusion, and, to reach it, they argue for another. But the second, if proved, is quite different, and answers their purpose only because they obscure it and confound it with the first.... The deity they want, is, of course, finite, a person much like themselves, with thoughts and feelings limited and mutable in the process of time.... And for their purpose, what is not this is really nothing. (_Appearance and Reality_; p. 532).

And it is really what people mean by God that is decisive. It is not at all a question of what they might be made to mean, or what they ought to mean. It is wholly a matter of what they _do_ mean. And to say that what people intend to affirm in an expression of belief is not true, is to say that the belief itself is false. If the God I believe in is a delusion, then my God ceases to exist. True, I may if I think it worth while acquire another one, but that will not revive the first. It is what people believe that is the important question, not what some ingenious speculator may succeed in making the belief stand for.

Honestly to be of service to theism the God established must be a person. To be intelligible, having regard to the historical developments of religion, the God proved must be a person. The relation demanded by religion between man and God must be of a personal character. No man can love a pure abstraction; he might as reasonably fall in love with a triangle or profess devotion to the equator. The God of religion must be a person, and it is precisely that, as a controlling force of the universe, in which modern thought finds it more and more difficult to believe, and which modern science decisively rejects. And in rejecting this the death blow is given to those religious ideas, which however disguised find their origin in the fear-stricken ignorance of the primitive savage.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF GOD.

The alleged universality of the belief in God is only inferentially an argument for its truth. The inference is that if men have everywhere developed a particular belief, this general agreement could only have been reached as a consequence of a general experience. A universal effect implies a universal cause. So put the argument seems impressive. As a matter of fact the statement is one long tissue of fallacies and unwarranted assumptions.

In the first place, even admitting the universal pressure of certain facts, it by no means follows that the theistic interpretation of those facts is the only one admissible. There is no exception to the fact that men have everywhere come to the conclusion that the earth was flat, and yet a wider and truer knowledge proved that universal belief to be quite false. The fact of a certain belief being universal only warrants the

assumption that the belief itself has a cause, but it tells us nothing whatever concerning its truthfulness. The truth here is that the argument from universality dates its origin from a stage of human culture suitable to the god idea itself, a stage when very little was known concerning the workings of the mind or the laws of mental development. Otherwise it would have been seen that all the universality of a belief really proves is the universality of the human mind--and that means that, given an organism of a certain kind, it will react in substantially an identical manner to the same stimuli. Thus it is not surprising to find that as the human organism is everywhere fundamentally alike, it has everywhere come to the same conclusions in face of the same set of conditions. A man reacts to the universe in one way, and a jelly fish in another way. And universality is as true of the reactions of the latter as it is of those of the former.

And this means that a delusion may be as widespread as truth, a false inference may gain as general an acceptance as a true one. What belief has been more general than the belief in witches, fairies, and the like? But we see in the prevalence of these and similar beliefs, not a presumption of their truth, but only the grounds for a search after the conditions, social and psychological, which gave them birth.

The truth is that the conditions which give rise to the belief in gods are found in all ages, and no one would be more surprised than the Atheist to find it otherwise. But here, precisely as in the case of good and bad spirits, the vital question is not that people have everywhere believed in the existence of supernatural beings,[1] but an understanding of the conditions from which the beliefs themselves have grown. That alone can determine whether in studying the god idea we are studying the acquisition of a truth or the growth of a fallacy.

Next, while it may be granted, at least provisionally, that the belief in supernatural beings is universal, against that has to be set the fact that the whole tendency of social development is to narrow the range of the belief, to restrict the scope of its authority, and to so attenuate it that it becomes of no value precisely where it is supposed to be of most use. The belief in God is least questioned where civilisation is lowest; it is called into the most serious question where civilisation is most advanced. To-day the belief in God is only universal in the sense that some representatives of it are to be found in all societies. The majority may still profess to have it, but it has ceased to be universal in the strict sense of the term. Nor will it be disputed that the number of convinced disbelievers is everywhere on the increase. The fact is everywhere lamented by the official exponents of religion. All that we can say is that the belief in God is universal--with those who believe in him. And even here universality of belief is only secured by their refraining from discussing precisely what it is they mean by "God," and what it is they believe in. There is agreement in obscurity, each one dreading to see clearly the features of his assumed friend for fear he should recognise the face of an enemy.

Finally, the suspicious feature must be pointed out that the belief in God owes its existence, not to the trained and educated observation of civilised times, but to the uncritical reflection of the primitive mind. It has its origin there, and it would indeed be remarkable if, while in almost every other direction the primitive mind showed itself to be hopelessly wrong, in its interpretation of the world in this particular respect it has proved itself to be altogether right. As a matter of fact, this primitive assumption is going the way of the others, the only difference being that it is passing through more phases than some. But the decay is plain to all save those who refuse to see. The process of refinement cannot go on for ever. In other matters knowledge passes from a nebulous and indefinite stage to a precise and definite one. In the case of theism it pursues an opposite course. From the very definite god, or gods, of primitive mankind we advance to the vague and indefinite god of the modern theist--a God who, apparently, means nothing and does nothing, and at most stands as a symbol for our irremovable ignorance. Clearly this process cannot go on for ever. The work of attenuation must stop at some point. And one may safely predict that just as the advance of scientific knowledge has taken over one department after another that was formerly regarded as within the province of religion, so one day it will be borne in upon all that an hypothesis such as that of theism, which does nothing and explains nothing, may be profitably dispensed with.

What really remains for discussion is a problem of socio-psychology. That is, we have to determine the conditions of origin of so widespread a belief, but which we believe to be false. The materials for answering this question are now at our command, and whatever differences of opinion there may be concerning the stages of development, there is very little concerning their essential character. And it is not without significance that this question of origin is one that the present-day apologists of theism seem pretty unanimous in leaving severely alone.

Let us commence with the fact that religion is something that is acquired. Every work on the origin of religion assumes it, and all investigation warrants the assumption. The question at issue is the mode of acquisition. And here one word of caution is advisable. The wide range of religious ideas and their existence at a very low culture stage, precludes the assumption that religious ideas are generated in the same conscious way as are scientific theories. Even with the modern mind our conclusions concerning many of the affairs of life are formed in a semi-conscious manner. Most frequently they are generated subconsciously, and are only consciously formulated under pressure of circumstances. And if we are to understand religion aright we must be on our guard against attributing to primitive mankind a degree of scientific curiosity and reflective power to which it can lay no claim. We have to allow for what one writer well calls "physiological thought," thought, that is, which rises subconsciously and has its origin in the pressure of insistent experience.

A comprehensive survey of religious beliefs show that there are only two things that can be said to be common to them all. They differ in teachings, in their conceptions of deity, and in modes of worship. But all religions agree in believing in some kind of ghostly existence and in a continued life beyond the grave. I use the expression, "ghostly existence," because we can really trace the idea of God backward until we lose the definite figure in a very general conception, much as astronomers have taught us to lose a definite world in the primitive fire-mist. So when we get beyond the culture stage at which we meet with the definite man-like God, we encounter an indefinite thought stage at which we can dimly mark the existence of a frame of mind that was to give birth to the more concrete conception.

The most general term for the belief in the various orders of gods thus becomes the belief in invisible, super-material beings, like, and yet superior to man. It is for this reason that Professor Tylor's definition of religion as "the belief in spiritual beings--so long as we do not use the term "spiritual" in its modern sense"--seems to me the moat satisfactory definition yet offered. It is the one point on which all religions agree, and for this reason may be regarded as their essential feature.

This taken for granted, our next point of enquiry is, What was there in the conditions of primitive life that would give rise to a belief in this super-material, or in modern language, spiritual existence? Now there are at least two sets of experiences that seem adequate to the required explanation. The one is normal, the other abnormal. The first is connected directly with the universal experience of dreams. The savage is, as Tylor says, a severely practical person. He believes what he sees and, one may add, he sees what he believes. Knowing nothing of the distinction we draw between a fact and an illusion, ignorant of the functions, or even the existence of a nervous system, the dreams of a savage are to him as real as his waking experiences. He does not say "I dreamed I saw So-So," but like the Biblical characters he says, "I saw So-So in a dream." The two forms of expression carry all the difference between fact and fancy. One thing is therefore obvious to the savage mind--something escapes from the body, travels about, and returns. Such a conviction does not represent the conclusions of a genius speculating upon the meaning of unexplained facts. It is a conviction steadily built up by the pressure of unvarying experience, as steadily as is the conviction that fire burns or that water is wet. The very universality of the belief is proof that it had some such sub-conscious origin.

A second class of experiences lead to the same conclusion. In temporary loss of consciousness the savage again sees proof of the existence of a double. With epilepsy or insanity there is offered decisive proof that some spirit has taken possession of the individual's body. Even in

civilised countries this belief was widely held hardly more than a century ago. And both these classes of experience are enforced by the belief that the shadow of a man, an echo, a reflection seen in water, etc., are all real things. The proofs that the belief in a "soul" does originate in this way are now so plentiful that exact references are needless. Examination of primitive religious beliefs all over the world yield the one result, without there being any evidence to the contrary.

Primitive philosophy does not stop here. Man dreams of things as well as of persons, and a general extension of the belief in a ghost or double is made until it covers almost everything. As Tylor says, "the doctrine of souls is worked out with remarkable breadth and consistency. The souls of animals are recognised by a natural extension from the theory of human souls; the souls of trees and plants follow in some vague partial way; and the souls of inanimate objects expand the category to the extremest boundary." The reasoning of the primitive mind is thus, given its limitations and unsound premises, uncompromisingly logical. One can trace the processes of reasoning more easily than is the case with modern man because it is less disturbed by cross-currents of acquired knowledge and conflicting interests.

I am giving but the barest outline of a vast subject because I am desirous of keeping the attention of the reader on what I believe to be the main issue. For that reason I am not discussing whether animism--the vitalising of inanimate objects--has an independent origin, or whether it is a mere extension of the ghost theory. Either theory does not affect my main position, which is that the idea of God is derived from the ignorance of primitive humanity, and has no other authority than a misunderstanding of natural facts. On that point the agreement among all schools of anthropologists is now very general. Personally, however, I do not believe that men would ever have given a soul to trees or other natural objects unless they had first given them to living beings, and had thus familiarised themselves with the conception of a double.

At present, though, we are on the track of the gods. The belief that every human being, and nearly every object, possesses a soul, ends in surrounding man with a cloud of spirits against which he has to be always on his guard. The general situation is well put by Miss Kingsley, who gives a picture of the West African that may well stand for the savage world in general.

> Everything happens by the action of spirits. The thing he does himself is done by the spirit within acting on his body, the matter with which that spirit is associated. Everything that is done by other things is done by their spirit associated with their particular mass of matter.... The native will point out to you a lightning stricken tree and tell you its spirit has been killed. He will tell you, when the earthen cooking pot is broken, it has lost its spirit. If his weapon failed him, it is because he has stolen or made its spirit sick by means of his influence on other spirits of the same class.... In every action of his life he shows you how he lives with a great, powerful spirit world around him. You see him before running out to hunt or fight rubbing stuff in his weapon to strengthen the spirit that is in it; telling it the while what care he has taken of it; running through a list of what he had given it before, though these things had been hard to give; and begging it, in the hour of his dire necessity, not to fail him.... You see him bending over the face of the river, talking to its spirit with proper incantations, asking it when it meets an enemy to upset his canoe and destroy him ... or, as I have myself seen in Congo Fran[illegible]aise, to take down with it, away from his village, the pestilence of the spotted death. (_West African Studies_; pp. 394-5).

When Feurbach said that the "realm of memory was the world of souls," he expressed a profound truth in a striking manner. It is dreams, swoons, catalepsy, with their allied states which suggest the existence of a double or ghost. Even in the absence of the mass of evidence from all quarters in support of this, the fact of the ghost always being pictured as identical in clothing and figure with the dead man would be almost enough to demonstrate its dream origin. Into that aspect of the matter, however, we do not now intend to enter. We are now only concerned with

the bearing of the ghost theory on the origin of God. Another step or two and we shall have reached that point. Believing himself surrounded on all sides by a world of ghosts the great concern of the savage is to escape their ill-will or to secure their favour. Affection and fear--fear that the ghost, if his wants are neglected, will wreak vengeance through the agency of disease, famine, or accident--leads insensibly to the ghosts of one's relations becoming objects of veneration, propitiation, and petition. All ghosts receive some attention for a certain time after death, but naturally special and sustained honours are reserved for the heads of families,[2] and for such as have been distinguished for various qualities during life. In this way ancestor worship becomes one of the most general forms of religious observances, and the gradual development of the great man or the deceased ancestor into a deity follows by easy stages. The principles of ancestor worship, to again cite the indispensible Tylor, are not difficult to understand:--

> They plainly keep up the social relations of the living world. The dead ancestor, now passed into a deity, simply goes on protecting: his own family and receiving suit and service from them as of old; the dead chief still watches over his own tribe, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong.

That this deification of ancestors and of dead men actually takes place is indisputable. The Mythologies of Greece and Rome offer numerous examples, and the deification of the Roman Emperors became the regular rule. Numerous examples to the same end are supplied from India by Mr. W. Crookes and Sir A. C. Lyall. That this way of honouring the dead is not limited to natives is shown by the famous case of General Nicholson, who actually received the honour of deification during his lifetime. Anyone who cares to consult those storehouses of information, Spencer's "Principles of Sociology" (Vol. I.), Tylor's "Primitive Culture," and Frazer's "Golden Bough" will find the whole god-making process set forth with a wealth of illustration that can hardly fail to carry conviction. Finally, in the case of Japan and China we have living examples of an organised system of religion based upon the deification of ancestors.[3]

It will make it easier to understand the evolution of the god from the ghost if we bear in mind that with primitive man the gods are conceived neither as independent existences nor as creators. Even immortality is not asserted of them. The modern notions of deity, largely due to the attempt to accommodate the idea of god to certain metaphysical and philosophical conceptions, are so intermingled with the primitive idea, that there is always the danger of reading into the primitive intelligence more than was ever there. The consequence is that by confusing the two senses of the word many find it difficult to realise how one has grown out of the other. Such ideas as those of creation and independence are quite foreign to the primitive mind. Savages are like children in this respect; their interest in things is primarily of a practical character. A child does not begin by asking how a thing came to be; it asks what it is for or what it does. So the prime concern of the savage is, what are certain things for? what will they do? are they injurious or beneficial? It is because of this practical turn of mind that so much attention is paid to the ghost, having once accepted its existence as a fact. The superiority of the gods do not consist in their substantial difference from himself, but in the greater power for good or evil conferred upon them by their invisible existence. Creation is a conception that does not arise until the capacity for philosophical speculation has developed. Then reflection sets to work; the nature of the god undergoes modification, and the long process of accommodating primitive religious beliefs to later knowledge commences, the end of which we have not yet seen.

The process of reading modern speculations into the religion of the savage leads to some curious results, one of which we cannot forbear mentioning. In his little work on "Animism" Mr. Edward Clodd, after tracing the fundamental ideas of religion to primitive delusion, says:--

> Herein (_i.e._, in dream and visions) are to be found the sufficing materials for a belief in an entity in the body, but not of it,

> which can depart and return at will, and which man everywhere has more or less vaguely envisaged as his "double" or "other self."... The distinction between soul and body, which explained to man his own actions, was the key to the actions of animate and inanimate things. A personal life and will controlled them. This was obviously brought home to him more forcibly in the actions of living things, since these so closely resembled his own that he saw no difference between themselves and him. _Not in this matter alone have the intuitions of the savage found their confirmation in the discoveries of modern science_.... Ignorant of the reflection of sound, how else could he account for the echoes flung back from the hillside? Ignorant of the law of the interruption of light, how else could he explain the advancing and retreating shadows? _In some sense they must be alive; an inference supported by modern science._

The italics in the above passages are mine, and they serve to illustrate how certain writers manage to introduce quite misleading conceptions to their readers. It almost causes one to cease wondering at the persistence of religion when one finds a writer accepting the results of anthropological research, and at the same time claiming that savage "intuitions" are confirmed by modern science. If that be true, then all that Mr. Clodd has previously written must be dismissed as untrue. The statement is, however, quite inaccurate. The inference drawn by the savage is not supported by modern science. Neither on the existence of a soul nor on the existence of a god, nor on the nature of disease, nor on the causes of physical or psychical states has science confirmed the "intuitions" (whatever that conveniently cloudy word may mean) of the primitive savage. The acquisition of correct views would indeed be an easy thing if they could be gained by the "intuitions" of an untaught savage.

The assertion that "in some sense" natural forces must be alive (as though there can be any real sense in a term except the right sense), and that this inference is "supported by modern physics," is an illustration of that playing with words which is fatal to exact thought. The only sense in which the expression is used in physics is that of "active," and both "active" and "alive" owe their vogue to the necessity for controverting the older view that natural forces are "inert" or "dead" and need some external force to produce anything. It is a mere figure of speech; the evil is when it is taken and used as an exact expression of scientific fact. Let a reader of Mr. Clodd ask himself whether the life he thinks of when he speaks of forces being alive is animal life, and he will at once see the absurdity of the statement. And if he does not mean animal life, what life does he mean?

Putting on one side all such attempts at accommodation, we may safely say that given the origin of religion in the manner indicated, one may trace--at least in outline--the development of religion from the primitive ghost worship up to the rituals and beliefs of current creeds. I do not mean by this that _all_ religious beliefs and practices spring directly from ghost worship. Once religion is established, and the myth-making capacity let loose, additions are made that are due to all sorts of causes. The Romans and Greeks, for example, seem to have created a number of deities out of pure abstractions--gods of peace, of war, of fortune, and so forth. Why particular deities were invented, and how they became attached to particular groups of phenomena, are questions that it is often impossible to answer with any great degree of certainty, but why there should be any gods at all is a question that can be answered, I think, on the lines above indicated.

The way in which the primitive ghost worship probably paved the way for some of the doctrines of the "higher" religions may be seen on taking a story such as the death and resurrection of the Gospel Jesus. In his treatise on "The Attis" Mr. Grant Allen made the ingenious suggestion that the greater fertility of the ground on and near the grave, owing to the food placed there to feed the ghost, would produce in the savage mind the conviction that this increased fertility was due to the beneficent activity of the double of the dead man. Reasoning from this basis, it would be a simple conclusion that the production, or lack, of crops was everywhere due to the action of good or evil spirits. In the next place, it must be remembered that it is the act of dying which raises the human being to the level of a guardian spirit or god; and

from this to the production of a god by ceremonial killing would be a natural and an easy step. In this last respect, at least, we are upon the firm ground of fact, and not on that of mere theory. If a reader will take the trouble to peruse the numerous examples collected by Tylor in the first chapter of his "Primitive Culture," and those provided by Frazer in the "Golden Bough," he will find the evidence for this overwhelming. Examples of the practice of killing a human being and burying his body under the foundations of a castle or a bridge are very common, and the modern custom of burying coins under a foundation-stone is a harmless and interesting survival of this custom. In some parts of Africa a boy and girl are buried where a village is to be established. In Polynesia the central pillar of a temple was placed on the body of a human victim. In Scotland there is the legend that St. Columba buried the body of St. Oran under his monastery to make the building secure. Any country will supply stories of a similar kind. Finally, we have the amusing story of the manner in which Sir Richard Burton narrowly escaped deification. Exploring in Afghanistan in the disguise of a Mohammedan fakir, he received a friendly hint that he would do well to get off without delay. He expressed surprise, as the people seemed very fond of him. That, it was explained, was the cause of the trouble. They thought so much of him they intended to kill him, and thus retain so excellent a man with them for ever.

When Tylor wrote, the prevalent impression was that this killing of human beings was due to a desire to appease the spirits of the place. Later investigation showed that instead of a sacrifice it was a creation. The purpose was to create a local god who would watch over the building or settlement. God-making was thus shown to be a universal practice.

Our next step must be taken in the company of Sir James Frazer. On all-fours with the practice of creating a guardian deity for a building is that of making a similar guardian for crops and vegetation. The details of this practice are interesting, but they need not now detain us. It is enough that the practice existed, and, as Frazer shows, was an annual practice. Year by year the god was killed in order that the seed might ripen and the harvest be secured. In some cases the body was cut up and pieces buried in the fields; in other cases it was burned and the ashes scattered over the ground. Gradually the ritual becomes more elaborate, but the central idea remains intact that of a human being converted into a god by being killed, a man sacrificed for the benefit of the tribe. In the light of these researches the New Testament story becomes only a more recent version of a widespread savage superstition. The time of the sacrifice, the symbolism, the practices all prove this. The crucified Saviour, in honour of whom all the Christian cathedrals and churches of the world are built, is only another late survival of the god-making practice of primitive savagery.

The gods are, then, ultimately deified ghosts. They are born of misinterpreted subjective and objective experiences. This is among the surest and most firmly established results of modern investigation. It matters not what modifications later knowledge may demand; it will only mean a change of form, not of substance. On any scientific theory we are bound to explain the origin of the gods in terms of human error. And no subsequent development can alter its character. We may trace the various stages of a universal delusion, but nothing can convert a delusion into a reality. It is now universally recognised that the primitive notions of gods represent false conclusions from misunderstood facts. No one now believes that the visions seen during sleep are proofs of a wandering double. No one believes that it is necessary to supply the ghost of the dead with food, or with weapons, or with wives. We do not believe that the wind, the stars, the waters are alive or are capable of being influenced by our petitions. All the phenomena upon which the god idea was originally built are now known to be susceptible to a radically different explanation. And if this is so, what other foundations have we on which to build a belief in God? There is none. There is only one plausible reason for the belief in God, and that is the reason advanced by the savage. When we get beyond that we are not dealing with reasons for holding the belief, but only with excuses for retaining it. Unfortunately, thousands are familiar with the excuses, and only a few with the reasons. Were it otherwise a great deal of what follows need never have been written.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Both the words "supernatural" and "God" are here used somewhat loosely. In fact the conception of the supernatural arises gradually, and as a consequence of developing knowledge which, so to speak, splits the universe into two. So also with the belief in God. There is clearly an earlier form in which there exists a kind of mental plasma from which the more definite conception of God is subsequently formed. On this topic the reader may consult "The Threshold of Religion," by R. R. Marett, 1914.

[2] For the importance of this in the history of religion see Fustel de Coulanges' "The Ancient City."

[3] The perpetuation of this earlier stage of religion in China and Japan appears to make the transition to Free-thought easier than in countries where religion has under-gone a more advanced evolution. In both the countries named, the better minds find it quite easy to treat their religion as merely the respect paid to ancestors, and thus divest it of the supernatural element. In Christian countries there is also the attempt to restate beliefs in terms of current morality and sociology, but the transition is more difficult.

CHAPTER III.

HAVE WE A RELIGIOUS SENSE?

In all discussions of theism there is one point that is usually overlooked. This is that theism is in the nature of a hypothesis. And, like every hypothesis, its value is proportionate to the extent to which it offers a satisfactory explanation of the facts with which it professes to deal. If it can offer no explanation its value is nil. If its explanation is only partial, its value will be determined by the degree to which it can claim superiority over any other hypothesis that is before us. But every hypothesis implies two things. There is a group of things to be explained, and there is the hypothesis itself that is offered in explanation. In the harmony of the two, and in the possibility of verification, lies the only proof of truth that can be offered.

If this be granted it at once disposes of the plea that a conviction of the existence of God springs from some special quality of the mind which enables man to arrive at a conclusion in a manner different from the way in which conclusions concerning other subjects are reached. Intuition as a method of discovering truth is pure delusion. All that can be rationally meant by such a word as intuition is summarised experience. When we speak of knowing a thing "intuitively," all that we can mean is that, experience having furnished us with a sufficient guidance, we are able to reach a conclusion so rapidly that we cannot follow the steps of the mental process involved. That this is so is seen in the fact that our intuitions always follow the line of our experience. A stockbroker may "intuitively" foresee a rise or fall of the market, but his intuition will fail him when considering the possibilities of a chemical composition. To say that a man knows a thing by intuition is only one way of saying that he does not know how he knows it--that is, he is unable to trace the stages of his own mental operations. And in this sense intuition is universal. It belongs as much to the cooking of a dumpling as it does to the belief in deity.

But it is evident that when the theist talks of intuition, what he has in mind is something very different from this. He is thinking of some special quality of mind that operates independently of experience, either racial or individual. And this simply does not exist. In religion man is never putting into operation qualities of mind different from those he employs in other directions. Whether we call a state of mind religious or not is determined, not by the mental processes involved, but by the object to which it is directed. Hatred and love, anger, pleasure, awe, curiosity, reverence, even worship, are exactly the same whether directed towards "God" or towards anything else. Human qualities are fundamentally identical, and may be expressed in relation to all sorts of objects.

The attempt to mark religion off from the rest of life, to be approached by special methods and in a special frame of mind, takes many forms, and it may be illustrated by the manner in which it is dealt with by Professor Arthur Thomson. In a little work entitled "An Introduction to Science," and specially intended for general consumption, he remarks, as a piece of advice to his readers:--

> We would remind ourselves and our readers that the whole subject should be treated with reverence and sympathy, for it is hardly possible to exaggerate the august r&#65533;le of religion in human life. Whatever be our views, we must recognise that just as the great mathematicians and metaphysicians represent the aristocracy of the human intellect, so the great religious geniuses represent the aristocracy of human emotion. And in this connection it is probably useful to bear in mind that in all discussions about religious ideas or feelings we should ourselves be in an exalted mood, and yet "with a compelling sense of our own limitations," and of the vastness and mysteriousness of the world.

If Professor Thomson had been writing on "Frames of Mind Fatal to Scientific Investigation" he could hardly have chosen a better illustration of his thesis. One may safely say that anyone who started an examination of religion in this spirit, and maintained it throughout his examination, would perform something little short of a miracle did he reach a sound conclusion. A feeling of sympathy may pass, but why "reverence"? Reverence is a very complex state, but it certainly includes respect and a certain measure of affection. And how is one to rationally have respect or affection for anything _before_ one has ascertained that they are deserving of either? Is anyone who happens to believe that religion is _not_ worthy of reverence to be ruled out as being unfit to express an opinion? Clearly, on this rule, either we compel a man to sacrifice his sense of self-respect before we will allow him to be heard, or we pack the jury with persons who confess to have reached a decision before they have heard the evidence. It would almost seem from the expression that while examining religion we should be in an "exalted mood" that Professor Thomson has in view the last contingency. For by an exalted mood we can only understand a religious mood--that is, we must believe in religion before we examine it, otherwise our examination is profanity. Well, that is just the cry of the priest in all ages. And while it is sound religion, there is no question of its being shocking science. Even the mere feeling of exaltation is not to be encouraged during a scientific investigation. One can understand Kepler when he had discovered the true laws of planetary motion, or Newton when he embraced in one magnificent generalisation the fall of a stone and the revolution of a planet, experiencing a feeling of exaltation; but exaltation must follow, not precede, the conclusion. At any rate, there are few scientific teachers who would encourage such a feeling during investigation.

Leaving for a moment the question of religious geniuses being the aristocrats of human emotion, we may take the same writer's view of the limitations of science, thus providing an opening for the intrusion of religion. This is given in the form of a criticism of the following well-known passage from Huxley:--

> If the fundamental proposition of evolution is true, namely, that the entire world, animate and inanimate, is the result of the mutual interaction, according to definite laws, of forces possessed by the molecules which made up the primitive nebulosity of the universe; then it is no less certain that the present actual world reposed potentially in the cosmic vapour, and that an intelligence, if great enough, could from his knowledge of the properties of the molecules of that vapour have predicted the state of the fauna in Great Britain in 1888 with as much certitude as we say what will happen to the vapour of our breath on a cold day in winter.

Now, if the principle of evolution be accepted, the truth of Huxley's statement appears to be self-evident. It may be that no intelligence capable of making such a calculation will ever exist, but the abstract

possibility remains. Professor Thomson calls it "a very strong and confident statement," which illustrates the need for philosophical criticism. His criticism of Huxley's statement is based on two grounds. These are: (1) "No complete physico-chemical description has ever been given of any distinctively vital activity; and (2) the physical description of things cannot cover biological phenomena, nor can the biological description cover mental and moral phenomena." There is, he says,

> The physical order of nature--the inorganic world--where mechanism reigns supreme. (2) There is the vital order of nature--the world of organisms--where mechanism proves insufficient. (3) There is the physical order of nature--the world of mind--where mechanism is irrelevant. Thus there are three fundamental sciences--Physics, Biology, and Psychology--each with characteristic questions, categories and formul&#65533;.

Now, however earnestly Huxley's statement calls for criticism, it is clear to us that nothing useful in that direction is offered by Prof. Thomson. It is quite plain that the abstract possibility of such a calculation as that named by Huxley can never be ruled out by science, since such a conception lies at the root of all scientific thinking. After all, want of knowledge only proves--want of knowledge; and Sir Oliver Lodge would warn Prof. Thomson of the extreme danger of resting an argument on the ignorance of science at any particular time.[4]

I note this statement of Professor Thomson's chiefly because it illustrates a very common method of dealing with the mechanistic or non-theistic view of the universe. In this matter Professor Thomson may claim the companionship of Sir Oliver Lodge, who says, "Materialism is appropriate to the material world, not as a philosophy, but as a working creed, as a proximate, an immediate formula for guiding research. Everything beyond that belongs to another region, and must be reached by other methods. To explain the psychical in terms of physics and chemistry is simply impossible.... The extreme school of biologists ... ought to say, if they were consistent, there is nothing but physics and chemistry at work anywhere." With both these writers there is the common assumption that the mechanist assumes there is a physical and chemical explanation of all phenomena. And the assumption is false. There is a story of a well-known lecturer on physiology who commenced an address on the stomach by remarking that that organ had been called this, that, and the other, but the one thing he wished his students to bear in mind was that it was a stomach. So the mechanist, while firmly believing that there is an ascending unity in all natural phenomena, is never silly enough to deny that living things are alive, or that thinking beings think.

But unless Professor Thomson does impute this to the mechanist, we quite fail to see the relevance his assertion that there are three departments, physics, biology, and psychology, each with its characteristic questions, categories, and formul&#65533;. Of course, there are, and equally, of course, physical laws will not cover biological facts; nor will biological laws cover psychological ones. This is not due to any occult cause, but to the simple fact that as each group of phenomena has its characteristic features, each set of laws are framed to cover the phenomena presented by that group. Otherwise there would be no need of these special laws. It is astonishing how paralysing is the effect of the theistic obsession on the minds of even scientific men, since it leads them to ignore what is really a basic consideration in scientific method.

Perhaps a word or two more on this topic is advisable. If it is permissible to arrange natural phenomena in a serial order, we may place them in succession as physical, chemical, biological, and psychological. But these names represent no more than descriptions of certain features that are to the group common, otherwise the grouping would be useless and impossible. And it is part of the business of science to frame "laws"--descriptions--of phenomena such as will enable us to express their characteristic features in a brief formula. It is, therefore, quite true to say that you cannot express vital phenomena in terms of physics or chemistry. And no materialist who took the trouble to understand materialism, instead of taking a statement of what it is from

an anti-materialist, ever thought otherwise. _Each specific group of phenomena can only be covered by laws that belong to that group, and which were framed for that express purpose._ A psychological fact can no more be expressed in terms of chemistry than a physical fact can be expressed in terms of biology. These truths are as plain to the mechanist as they are to the vitalist. Mental life, the scientific categories, are real to all; the only question at issue is that of their origin.

To explain is to make intelligible, and in that sense all scientific explanation consists in the establishing of equivalents. When we say that A, B, C are the factors of D, we have asserted D is the equivalent of A, B, C--plus, of course, all that results from the combination of the factors. When we say that we have explained the formation of water by showing it to be the product of H.2.O. we have shown that whether we say "water" or use the chemical formula we are making identical statements. If we are working out a problem in dynamics we meet with exactly the same principle. We must prove that the resultant accounts for all the forces in operation at the time. Now, all that the mechanist claims is that it is extremely probable that one day the scientist will be able to work out the exact physico-chemical conditions that are the equivalents of biological phenomena, and, in turn, the physico-chemical-biological conditions that are the equivalents of psychological phenomena. Very considerable progress has already been made in this direction, and, as Sir Oliver Lodge says, there are probably very few scientific men who would deny the likelihood of this being done.

But this does not deny the existence of differences between these groups of phenomena; neither does it assert that we can describe the characteristic features of one group in terms that belong to another group. Once a group of phenomena, biological, or chemical is there, we must have special formul&#65533; to describe them, otherwise there would be no need for these divisions. It is admitted that the earth was at one time destitute of life; it is also admitted that there are forms of life destitute of those features which we call mind. And, whatever be their mode of origin, once introduced they must be dealt with in special terms. Psychological facts must be expressed in terms of psychology, biological facts in terms of biology, and chemical facts in terms of chemistry. You may give the chemical and physical equivalent of a sunset. That is one aspect. You may also give the psychological explanation of the emotion of man on beholding it. That is another aspect. But you cannot express the psychological fact in terms of chemistry because it belongs to quite another category. A psychological fact, as such, is ultimate. So is a chemical or a biological fact. If by analysis you reduce the psychological fact to its chemical and biological equivalents, its character as a psychological fact is destroyed. That is the product of the synthesis, and to seek in analysis for what only exists in synthesis, is surely to altogether misunderstand the spirit of scientific method. The curious thing is that a mere layman should have to correct men of science on this matter.

We can now return to Prof. Thomson's attempt to claim for religion a special place in the sphere of emotion. He claims, in the passage already cited, that "as the great mathematicians and metaphysicians represent the aristocracy of human intellect so the great religious geniuses represent the aristocracy of human emotion." There is nothing new in this claim, neither is there any evidence of its truth. Coleridge's dictum that the proper antithesis to religion is poetry is open to serious objection, but there is more to be said for it than may be said for the antithesis set up by Prof. Thomson. As a matter of fact, religious geniuses have often pursued their work with as much attention to scientific precision as was possible, and have prided themselves that they made no appeal to mere emotion. Justification by emotion has only been attempted when other means of securing conviction has failed. And the appeal to emotion has become popular for very obvious reasons. It enables the ordinary theologian to feel a comfortable superiority over a Spencer or a Darwin. It enables mediocrities to enjoy the feeling of being wise without the trouble of acquiring wisdom. It enables inherited prejudices to rank as reasoned convictions. And, in addition, there is nothing that cannot be conveniently proved or disproved by such a method.

In whatever form the distinction is met with it harbours a fallacy.

Intellectual activity is not and cannot be divorced from emotion. There are states of mind in which feeling predominates, and there are others in which reason predominates. But all intellectual states involve a feeling element. The often-made remark that feeling and intellect are in conflict is true only in the sense that ultimately certain intellectual states, _plus_ their associated feelings, are in conflict with other intellectual states plus _their_ associated feelings. To realise this one need only consider the sheer pleasure that results from the rapid sweep of the mind through a lengthy chain of reasoning, and the positive pain that ensues when the terms of a proposition baffles comprehension. The force of this is admitted by Prof. Thomson in the remark that man at the limit of his endeavour has fallen back on religion. Quite so; that is the painful feelings evoked by an intellectual failure have thrown a certain type of mind back on religion. In this they have acted like one who flies to a drug for relief from a pain he lacks the courage to bear. They take a narcotic when, often enough, the real need is for a stimulant.

In sober truth religion is no more necessarily connected with the emotions than are other subjects of investigation. Those who have made the pursuit of "cold scientific truth" their life's work have shown every whit as much ardour and passion as those who have given their life to religion. The picture of man sacrificing himself in the cause of religion is easily matched by a Vesalius haunting the charnel houses of Europe, and risking the most loathsome diseases in the interests of scientific research. The abiding passion for truth in a character such as that of Roger Bacon or Bruno easily matches the enthusiasm of the missionary monk. The passion and the enthusiasm for science is less advertised than the passion and the enthusiasm for religion, but it is quite as real, and certainly not less valuable. The state of mind of Kepler on discovering the laws of planetary motion was hardly less ecstatic than that of a religious visionary describing his sense of "spiritual" communion. Only in the case of the scientist, it is emotion guided by reason, not reason checked and partly throttled by emotion.

When, therefore, Matthew Arnold defined religion as morality touched with emotion, he substituted a fallacy for a definition. Primarily religion is as much a conviction as is the Copernican system of astronomy. It exists first as an idea; it only exists as an emotion at a later stage. There is really no such thing as a religious emotion, there are only emotions connected with religion. Originally all religion is in the nature of an inference from observed or experienced facts. This inference may not be of the elaborate kind that we associate with modern scientific work, but it is there. The inference is an illogical one, but under the conditions inevitable. And being an inference religion is not primarily an emotion but a conviction, and it must stand or fall by its intellectual trustworthiness. It seems, indeed, little less than a truism to say that unless men first of all _believed_ something about religion they could never have emotions concerning it. Hope and fear may colour our convictions, they may prevent the formation of correct opinions, but they originate in connection with a belief in every case. And an emotion, if it be a healthful one, must be ultimately capable of intellectual justification. When this cannot be done, when we have mere emotion pleaded as a ground for rejecting rational examination, we have irrationalism driven to its last ditch.

FOOTNOTE:

[4] "The present powerlessness of science to explain or originate life is a convenient weapon wherewith to fell a pseudo-scientific antagonist who is dogmatising too loudly out of bounds; but it is not perfectly secure as a permanent support.... Life in its ultimate elements and on its material side is such a simple thing, it is but a slight extension of known chemical and physical forces.... I apprehend that there is not a biologist but believes (perhaps quite erroneously) that sooner or later the discovery will be made, and that a cell discharging all the essential functions of life will be constructed out of inorganic material." ("Man and the Universe," Chap. I.).

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARGUMENT FROM EXISTENCE.

What, now, are the facts upon which the modern believer in deity professes to base his belief and what are the arguments used to defend the position taken up?

Premising that the reasons advanced for the belief in deity are more in the nature of excuses than aught else, we may take first of all the argument derived from the mere existence of the universe, with the alleged impossibility of conceiving it as self-existent. Along with that there may also be taken as a variant of the argument from existence, the alleged impossibility of a natural "order" that should result from the inherent properties of natural forces. Now it is at least plain that whatever difficulty there is in thinking of the universe as either self-existing or self-adjusting is in no degree lessened by assuming a God as the originator and sustainer of the whole. The most that it does is to move the difficulty back a step, and while with many "out of sight out of mind" is as true of their attitude towards mental problems as it is towards the more ordinary things of life, the policy can hardly be commended in serious intellectual discussions. It is not a bit easier to think of self-existence or self-direction in connection with a god than it is in connection with the universe. And if we must rest ultimately with an insoluble difficulty, it is surely better to stop with the existence we know rather than to introduce a second existence which for all we know may be quite mythical.

It is no reply to say that the idea of God involves self-existence. It does nothing of the kind, or at least it can do so only by our making yet another assumption that is as unjustifiable as the previous one. If God is a personality, we have no conception of a personality that is self-existent. The only personality that we know is the human personality, and that is certainly derived. Our whole knowledge of human personality is that of something which is derived from pre-existing personalities, each of which is a centre of derived influences. Of personality as either the cause or the commencement of a series we have not the slightest conception. And the man who says he has can never have carefully examined the contents of his own mind.

The truth is that the fact of the existence of the universe provides no ground for argument in favour of either Atheism or Theism. Existence is a common datum for all. Some existence must be assumed in all argument since all argument implies something that is to be discussed and explained. And for that very reason we can offer no explanation of existence itself, since all explanation means the merging of one class of facts in a larger class. The largest class of facts we have is that which is included in the term "universe," and we cannot explain that by assuming another existence--God--about which we know nothing. To explain the unknown by the known is an intelligible procedure. To explain the known by the unknown is to forsake all intellectual sanity. Thus every difficulty that surrounds the conception of the universe as an ultimate fact, surrounds the existence of God as an ultimate fact. You cannot get rid of a difficulty by giving it another name. And whether we call ultimate existence "God," or "matter," or "substance," is of no vital importance to anyone who keeps his mind on the real issue that has to be decided. If the question, What is the cause of existence? be a legitimate one, it applies no less to the existence of God than it does to the existence of matter, or force, or substance. All that we gain is another problem which we add to the problems we already possess. We increase our burden without enlarging our comprehension. If, on the other hand, it is said that we need an all embracing formula that will make our conception of the universe coherent, it may be replied that we have that in such a conception as the persistence of force. And it is surely better to keep to a formula that does at least work, than to devise one that is altogether useless.

The inherent weakness of the theistic conception will be best seen by taking an orthodox presentation of the argument under consideration. In his well-known work on "Theism," Professor Flint says "that granting all the atoms of matter to be eternal, grant that all the properties and forces, which with the smallest degree of plausibility can be claimed for them to be eternal and indestructible, and it is still beyond expression improbable that these atoms, with these forces, if unarranged, uncombined, unutilised by a presiding mind, would give rise

to anything entitled to be called a universe. It is millions to one that they would never produce the simplest of the regular arrangements which we comprehend under the designation of course of nature." (_Theism_; pp. 107-8.)

Now this is an admirably clear and terse statement of an argument which is often presented in so verbose a manner that its real nature is, to a considerable extent, disguised. But in this case, clearness of statement makes for ease of refutation, as will be seen.

For, instead of the statement being, as the writer seems to think, almost self-evidently true, it is almost obtrusively false. Instead of its being millions to one, given matter and force with all their present properties, against the present arrangement of things occurring, it is inconceivable, assuming that nothing but the atoms and their properties exist, that any other arrangement than the present one should have resulted. For the present natural order is not something that is, so to speak, separable from our conception of natural forces, it is something that has grown out of and is the expression of the idea of nature. Thus, given a proper understanding of the principle of gravitation, and it is impossible to conceive an unsupported stone _not_ falling to the ground. Given a proper conception of the properties of the constituents of a chemical compound, and we can only conceive one result as possible. In all cases our conception of what _must_ occur follows from the nature of the forces themselves. This is necessarily the case since the conception of the ultimate properties of matter has been built up by the observation of the actual results. And one simply cannot conceive an alteration in these results without thinking of some alteration or modification of the causes of which they are the expression. What is true of the part is true of the whole. The present structure of the world stands as the inevitable outcome of the play of natural forces. This is both the expression of an actual fact and a condition of coherent thought. Uniformity of results from uniformity of conditions is a pre-requisite to sane thinking.

In reality, the expression "millions to one" is no more than an appeal to man's awe in facing a stupendous mechanism, and his feeling of impotence when dealing with so complex a subject as the evolution of a world. It can only mean that to a certain state of knowledge it _seems_ millions to one against the present order resulting. But to a certain state of knowledge it would seem millions to one against so fluid a thing as water ever becoming solid. To others it is a commonplace thing and a necessary consequence of the properties of water itself. To a savage it would be millions to one against a cloud of "fire mist" ever becoming a world with a highly diversified fauna and flora. To a scientist there is nothing more in it than antecedent and consequent. Such expressions as its being "millions to one" against certain things happening is never really more than an appeal to ignorance; it means only that our knowledge is not great enough to permit our tracing the successive stages of the evolution before us. Once the scientific conception of the universe is grasped, the marvel is not that the present order exists, the marvel would be that any other "order" should be, or that any radical alteration in it should occur.

And there really is no need to throw the whole universe at the head of the sceptic. That is an attempt to overcome him with sheer weight. Intrinsically there is nothing more marvellous in the evolution of a habitable globe from the primitive nebula, than there is in the fact that an unsupported stone always falls to the ground. It is only our familiarity with the one experience and our lack of knowledge concerning the other that gives us the condition of wonder in the one case and lack of it in the other. In the light of modern knowledge "order" is, as W. H. Mallock says, "a physical platitude, not a divine paradox."

Moreover, if the odds are a million to one against the existence of the present arrangement existing, the odds would be equally great against the existence of any other arrangement. And as the odds are equally great against all--seeing that _some_ arrangement must exist--there can be no logical value in using the argument against one arrangement in particular. The same question, "Why this arrangement and none other?" might arise in any case.

Finally, the absurdity of arguing that the "order" of nature compels a belief in deity may be seen by realising the fact that our conception of

order is itself the product of the experienced sequence which constitutes the order in question. Our ideas of order are not independent of the world, they are its product--an expression of the relation between organism and environment. Given a different organism, with different sense organs, and the world would appear different. On the other hand the whole structure of man is the result of the existing conditions. Assume the order to be changed, and the human organism--presuming it still to exist, will undergo corresponding modifications. It would not find less order or less beauty, the order and the beauty would simply be found in another direction. And, presumably, the theist would still point to the existence of _that_ order as clear proof of a designing intelligence.

Something needs to be said here on a more recent form of the argument from the "order" of nature than the one we have been discussing. There is no vital distinction between the old and the new form, but a variation in terms seems to produce on some minds a conviction of newness--itself a proof that the nature of the old form had never been fully realised.

This new form is that based upon what is called "Directivity." Recognising that it is no longer possible to successfully dispute the scientific proposition that the state of the universe at any one moment must be taken as the result of all the conditions then prevailing, and, therefore, it is to the operation of the ultimate properties of matter, force, ether,--or whatever name we choose to give to the substance of the universe--it is argued that we nevertheless require some directing force which will set, and keep the universe on its present track.

But there is really nothing in this beyond the now familiar appeal to human impotence. "We do not know," "We cannot see," are quite excellent reasons for saying nothing at all, but the very worst ground on which to make positive statements, or on which to base positive beliefs. The only condition that would justify our making human ignorance a ground on which to make statements of the kind named would be that we had demonstrably exhausted the possibilities of natural forces, and no further developments were possible in this direction. Far from this being the case there is not a single man of science who would dissent from the statement that we are only upon the threshold of a knowledge of their possibilities.

And this assumption of "direction" is unconvincing, if not suicidal in character. Assuming that direction may have occurred, the fact of direction adds nothing to the qualities or possibilities of existence, any more than the "directivity" of a chemist adds to the possibilities of certain elements when he brings them into combination. Unless the possibilities of the compound were already in the elements guidance would be useless. And, in the same way, unless the capacity for producing the universe we see already existed in the atoms themselves, no amount of "direction" could have produced it. God simply takes the place of the chemist bringing certain chemical elements in, of the engineer guiding certain forces along a particular channel. But no new capacity is created, and all that is done by either the chemist or the engineer _might_ occur without their interference. Otherwise it could not occur at all.

Now there is no denying that natural forces _do_ produce the phenomena around us. That is undeniable. And whether there be a god or not this fact remains quite unaffected. All that God can do is to set up certain combinations. But this does not exclude the possibility of this combination taking place without the operation of deity. In fact, it implies it. Either, then, natural forces possess the capacity to produce the universe as we see it, or they do not. If they do not, then it is impossible for us to conceive in what way even deity could produce it. If, on the other hand, they have this capacity, the argument for the existence of deity loses its force, and the theist is bound to admit that all that he claims as due to the action of deity might have happened without him. The theists own argument, if logically pursued ends in divesting it of all coercive value.

It is curious that the theist should fail to see that a much stronger argument for the operation of deity would have been of a negative character, to have proved that in some way God manifested an inhibitive influence and thus prevented certain things occurring which would have

transpired but for his interference. Regularity, or "order" is, as we have seen, the necessary consequence of the persistence of force. And so long as natural forces continue to express themselves in the way in which experience has led us to expect there is no need for us to think of anything beyond. The principle of inertia is with us here, for if it be true that force will persist in a given direction unless deflected from its course by some other force, it must be equally true that _all_ forces will work out a given consequence unless they are deflected from their course by the operation of some superior force.

Now if it were possible for the theist to show that in certain cases the normal consequences of known forces did not transpire, and that the aberration could not be accounted for by the operation of any other conceivable force, it might be argued with some degree of plausibility that there exists a controlling power beyond which answers to God. That might afford a plausible case for "directivity." But to insist upon the prevalence of "natural order" will not help the case for theism. It will rather embarrass it. It may, of course, impress all those whose conception of scientific method is poor--and sometimes one thinks that this is all that is deliberately aimed at--but it will not affect anyone else. To the informed mind it will appear that the Goddite is weakening his case with every step he takes in the direction of what he apparently believes to be a demonstration of its logical invulnerability.

CHAPTER V

THE ARGUMENT FROM CAUSATION.

The argument from causation may logically follow that from existence, of which it may be regarded as a part. It is presented under various forms, and when stated in a persuasive manner, is next to the argument from design, probably as popular as any. The principal reason for this is, I think, that very few people are concerned with thinking out exactly what is meant by causation, and the proposition that every event must have a cause, wins a ready assent, and when followed by the assertion that therefore the universe must have had a cause, which is God, the reasoning, or rather the parody of reasoning, appeals to many. There is a show of reason and logic, but little more.

Quite unquestionably a great deals depends upon what is meant by causation, and still more upon the use made of the law of causation by theists. Thus we have seen it urged against Materialists that neural activity cannot be the equivalent of thought because they do not resemble each other. And in another direction we meet with the same idea in the assertion that the cause must be equal to the effect, by which it is apparently meant that the cause must be _similar_ to the effect, and that unless we can discern in the cause the same qualities manifested by the effect, we have not established the fact of causation at all.

The complete and perfect answer to this last view is that the qualities manifest in an effect never are manifest in the cause, were it so it would be impossible to distinguish one from the other. The theist is, as is often the case, saying one thing and meaning another. What he says is that the cause must be adequate to the effect. There is no dispute here. But what he proceeds to argue is that the effect must be discernible in the cause, which is a different statement altogether. When he says that an effect cannot be greater than its cause, what he means is that an effect cannot be different from its cause, which is downright nonsense. He asks, How can that which has not life produce life? as though the question were on all fours with the necessity for a man to possess twenty shillings before he can give change for a sovereign.

Of course, the reply to all this is that the factors which when combined produce an effect always "give" something of which when uncombined they show no trace. There is no trace; of sweetness in the constituents of sugar of lead, or of blueness in the constituents of blue vitriol. In not a single case, if we are to follow the logic of the theist, is there a cause adequate to produce an effect, if we are to follow the reasoning of some theists; in each case we should have to assume some occult agent

as responsible for the result. In reality and in strict scientific truth, it is of the very essence of causation that there shall be present in the effect some quality or qualities that are not present in the cause. And all the confusion may be eliminated if there is borne in mind the simple and single consideration that in studying an effect it is the qualities of a combination with which we are properly concerned. And to expect to find in analysis that which is the product of synthesis is in the highest degree absurd.

Sir Oliver Lodge in his little work on "Life and Matter" properly corrects the fallacy with which I have been dealing, and points out that "properties can be possessed by an aggregate or an assemblage of particles, which in the particles themselves did not in the slightest degree exist." But in his desire to find a basis for his theism immediately falls into an error in an opposite direction. We are on safe ground, he says, in asserting that "whatever is in a part must be in the whole." This is true if it is meant that as the whole contains the part, the part is in the whole. But in that sense the statement was hardly worth the making. What his argument demands is the meaning that as man is possessed of mind, and as man is part of nature, therefore nature, as a whole, manifests mind. And that is not true. Mind may be a special manifestation of a special arrangement of forces, and only occurring under special conditions. What Sir Oliver says, then, is that the properties of a part are in the whole, because the part is included in whole. What he implies, and without this implication his argument is meaningless, is that the properties of a part belong to all parts of the whole. And that is a statement so grotesquely untrue that I suspect Sir Oliver would be the first to disown the plain implications of his own argument.

And here is Sir Oliver's illustration of his argument:--

> "the fact an apple has pips legitimises the assertion that an apple tree has pips ... but it would be a childish misunderstanding to expect to find actual pips in the trunk of a tree."

Now, why should the fact that an apple has pips legitimise the statement that an apple tree has pips, any more than it legitimises the statement that the soil from which it springs has pips? And if the tree has not actual pips, in what sense does it possess them? If the reply is that it possesses them potentially, one may meet that with the rejoinder that potentially pips, and everything else, including Sir Oliver Lodge, were contained in the primitive nebul�. As a matter of fact the apple tree does not contain pips either actually or potentially. In his championship of theism our scientist forgets his science. What the apple tree possesses is the capacity for building up a fruit with pips _with the aid of material extracted from the soil beneath and from the air around_. These pips are no more in the tree than they are in the air or the soil--not even as a figure of speech. One might, from any point of view, as reasonably look for the colour and shape and smell of an apple in the tree as to look for the pips. The properties of the tree is really one of the factors in the production of a result. Sir Oliver makes the mistake of writing as though the tree was the only factor in the problem.

This is not the place in which to enter on an exhaustive inquiry as to the nature of causation. It is enough to point out that the whole theistic fallacy rests here on the assumption that we are dealing with two things, when as a matter of fact we are dealing with only one. Cause and effect are not two separate things, they are the same thing viewed under two different aspects. When, for example, I ask for the cause of gunpowder and am told that it is sulphur, charcoal, and nitre, or for a cause of sulphuric acid and am given sulphide of iron and oxygen, it is clear that considered separately these ingredients are not causes at all. Whether charcoal and sulphur will become part of the cause of gunpowder or not will depend upon the presence of the third agent; whether sulphide of iron will rank as part of the cause of sulphuric acid will depend upon the presence of oxygen. In every case it is the assemblage of appropriate factors that constitute a real cause. But given the factors, gunpowder does not follow their assemblage, it is their assemblage that is expressed by the result. There is no succession in time, the result is instantaneous with the assemblage of the factors.

The effect is the registration, so to speak, of the combination of the factors.

Now if what has been said be admitted as correct the argument for the existence of God as based upon the fact of causation breaks down completely. If cause and effect are the expressions of a relation, and if they are not two things, but only one, under two aspects, "cause" being the name for the related powers of the factors, and "effect" the name for their assemblage, to talk, as does the theist, of working back along the chain of causes until we reach God, is nonsense. Even if we could achieve this feat of regression, we could not reach by this means a God distinct from the universe. For, as discovering the cause of any effect means no more than analysing an effect into its factors, the problem would ultimately be that of dealing with the question of how something already existing transformed itself into the existing universe. A form of a very doubtful Pantheism might be reached in this way, but not theism.

But here a fresh difficulty presents itself to the theist. A cause, as I have pointed out, must consist of at least two factors or two forces. This is absolutely indispensable. But assuming that we have got back to a point prior to the existence of the universe, we have on the theistic theory, not two factors, but only one. The essential condition for an act of causation is lacking. A single factor could only repeat itself. By this method the theist might reach "God." But having got there, there he would remain. He is left with God and nothing else, and with no possibility of reaching anything else.

We land in the same dilemma if we pursue another road. Philosophers of certain schools place existence in two categories. There is the world of appearance (phenomena), and there is the world of reality or substance (noumena). We know phenomena and their laws, they say, but no more. We do not know, and cannot know, Substance in itself; and the theist promptly adds that this unknown substance is but another name for God. The philosopher also warns us against applying the laws of the phenomenal world to noumena, reminding us that what we call "laws of nature" have been devised to explain the world as it presents itself to our consciousness. And to this we have the theological analogue in the warning not to measure the infinite by the finite or to judge God by human standards.

Now granting all this, let us see how the argument stands. The laws of phenomena belong exclusively to the phenomenal world. Their application and their validity are restricted to the world of phenomena. When we leave this region we are in a sphere to which they are quite inapplicable. What, then, can be meant by speaking of God as a "First Cause"? Cause is a phenomenal term, it expresses the relations between phenomena, and it has no meaning when applied to this assumed and unknown reality. We are in the position of one who is trying to use a colour scale in a world where vision does not exist. The theist is trying, in a similar way, to use the conception of "cause," which is created to express the relations between phenomena, in a world where phenomena have no existence. Thus, when the theist, to use his own words, has traced back an effect to a cause, and this to a prior cause, and so on, till he has reached a "First Cause," what happens? Simply this. At the end of the chain of phenomena the theist makes a mighty jump and gains the noumenon. But between this and the phenomenon he can establish no relation whatever. It cannot be a cause of phenomena because on his own showing causation is a phenomenal thing. He has worked back along the chain of causation, discarding link after link on his journey. Finally, he reaches God and discards the lot. And here he is left clinging with _no intelligible way of getting back again_. If on the other hand, he relates God to phenomena he has failed to get what he requires. He has merely added one more link to his chain of phenomena, and the "first cause" remains as far off as ever. For if God is not related to phenomena he ceases to be a cause of phenomena in the only sense in which he is of use to the theistic hypothesis.

Further, one may ask, Why travel back along the chain of causation to discover God? What is gained by travelling along an infinite series, and saying suddenly, "At this point I espy God." Confessedly we may trace back phenomena as far as we will without finding ourselves a step nearer a commencement. All we get is a transformation of pre-existing material into new forms. Consequently all the evidence that exists at

the moment we cease our journey existed when we began it. In short, if God can be shown to be the efficient cause of phenomena anywhere, he can be shown to be the cause everywhere, and the proof may be produced through phenomena immediately at hand as well as from those removed from us by an indefinite number of stages. The evidence becomes neither stronger nor more relevant by being put farther back. Proof is not like wine, its quality does not improve with age. To say that we must pause somewhere may be true, but that is only reminding us that both human time and human energy are limited. But it is certainly foolish to first of all induce mental exhaustion, and then use it as the equivalent of a positive and valuable discovery.

And even though by some undiscovered method we had reached that metaphysical nightmare a cause of all phenomena, and in defiance of all intelligibility had christened it a "First Cause," how would that satisfy the "causal craving"? Professor Campbell Fraser very properly says that "the old form of each new phenomenon as much needs explanation as the new form itself did, and this need is certainly neither satisfied nor destroyed by referring one form of existence to another." If A. is explained by B. we are driven to explain B. by C., and so on indefinitely. Or if we can stop with A. or B. then the causal craving is not so persistent as was supposed, and man can rest content within the limit of recognised limitations. For what Professor Fraser calls an "absolutely originating cause" is only such so long as we have not reached it. We are satisfied with an imaginary B. as an explanation of the actual A. so long as B. does not come within our grasp. So soon as it has become the originating cause of the phenomenon in hand we are off on a further search. "First" has no other intelligible sense or meaning than this. "First" in relation to a given cluster of phenomenon we may grant; "First" in the sense of calling for no further explanation is downright theological lunacy.

An eternal "First cause" could only be such in relation to an eternal effect. And in that case it could not be _prior_ to the effect since the effect is only the existing factors combined. Causation cannot carry us _beyond_ phenomena since it has no meaning apart from phenomena. The notion that because every phenomenon has a cause therefore there must be a cause for phenomena as a whole--meaning by this for the sum total of phenomena--is wholly absurd. It is not sound science, it is not good philosophy, it is not even commonsense. It is simply nonsense which is given an air of dignity because it is clothed in philosophic language. You cannot rise from phenomena to the theist's God; first, because, as I have said, cause and effect are names for the relation that is seen to exist between one phenomenon and another, and the theist is seeking after something that is above all relations. To postulate something that is not phenomena as the cause of phenomena, is like discussing the possibility of a bird's flight and dismissing the possibility of an atmosphere. Secondly, causation can give no clue to a God because the search for causes is a search for the conditions under which phenomena occur. And when we have described these conditions we have fulfilled all the conditions required to establish an act of causation. The theist, in short, commences with a wrong conception of causation. He proceeds by applying to one sphere language and principles from another, and to which they can have no possible application, and where they have no intelligibility. And having completely confused the issue, he ends with a conclusion which, even on his own showing, has no logical relation to the premises laid down.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN.

Kant called the argument from design "the oldest, the clearest, and the most adapted to the ordinary human reason," of all the arguments advanced on behalf of the belief in God. Kant's dictum, it will be observed, omits all opinion as to its quality, and his own criticism of it left it a sorry wreck. John Stuart Mill treated it far more respectfully, and commenced his examination of it with the flattering introduction, "We now at last reach an argument of a really scientific character," and, although he did not find the argument convincing, gave

it a most respectful dismissal. The purpose of the present chapter is to show that the argument from design in nature is in the last degree unscientific, that the analogy it seeks to establish is a false one, that it is completely and hopelessly irrelevant to the point at issue, and that one might grant nearly all it asks for, and even then show that it does not prove what it sets out to prove. That such an argument should have, and for so long, exerted so much influence over the human mind, gives one anything but a flattering impression of the power of reason in human affairs.

True it is that of late years the argument from design has felt the influence of the growth of the idea of evolution, and the champions of theism have used it with much greater caution, and under an obvious sense that it no longer wielded its old authority. The fact that this is so forms a commentary on the statement so often made that man's craving for an ultimate cause leads to the belief in God. The truth being that man--the average man--only seeks for an explanation of immediate happenings. Once the immediate thing before him is explained his curiosity is allayed. The average man lives mentally from hand to mouth, and troubles as little about ultimate explanations as he does about the exhaustion of the coal supply.

It is a point of some significance that the perception of design in nature, as with the belief in deity, is, if one may use the expression, pre-scientific in point of origin. What I mean by that is that it originates at a time when no other explanation of the origin of natural adaptations existed. It did not establish itself as one of several rival explanations and in virtue of its own strength. It was established simply because no other explanation was at the time conceivable. And so soon as another explanation, such as that of natural selection, was placed before the world, the origin of adaptations as a product of an extra-natural designing intelligence became to most educated minds simply impossible. The perception of design in nature was, as a matter of fact, no more than a special illustration of the animistic frame of mind which reads vitality into all natural happenings. It is impossible to find in the statement that particular adaptations in nature are designed anything more scientific than one can find in the belief that rain is the product of a heavenly rain-cow, or that flashes of lightning are spears thrown by competing heavenly warriors. It is the language only that differs in the two cases. The frame of mind indicated in the two cases are identical.

The attractiveness of the argument from design lies in its nearness to hand and in its appeal to facts, combined with the impossibility of verification. That nature is full of strange and curious examples of adaptation is clear to all, although the significance of these adaptations are by no means so clear. Moreover, a very casual study of these cases show that they are better calculated to dazzle than to convince. The presentation of a number of more or less elaborate facts of adaptation, followed with the remark that we are unable to see how such cases could have been brought about in the absence of a designing intelligence, is, at best, an appeal to human weakness and ignorance. The reverse of such a position is that if we had complete knowledge of the causes at work, the assumption of design might be found to be quite unnecessary. "We cannot see" is only the equivalent of we do not know, and that is a shockingly bad basis on which to build an argument.

When, therefore, an eminent electrician like Professor Fleming says, "We have overwhelming proof that in the manufacture of the infinite number of substances made in Nature's laboratory there must be at all stages some directivity," this can only mean that Professor Fleming cannot see the way in which these substances are made. It does not mean that he sees _how_ they are made. And in saying this he is in no better position than was Kepler, who after describing the true laws of planetary motion, when he came to the question of _why_ the planets should describe these motions fell back on the theory of "Angelic intelligences" as the cause. The true explanation came with the physics of Galileo and Newton, and with that, farewell to the angelic "directivity." The only reason for Kepler's angels was his ignorance of the causes of planetary motion. The only reason why Professor Fleming says that the atoms "have to be guided into certain positions to build up the complex molecules" is that he is unable to isolate this assumed directive force and to show it in operation; he is like a modern Kepler faced with something the cause of which he doesn't know, and lugging in "God" to save further trouble. It

is an assumption of knowledge where no knowledge exists. "God" is always what Spinoza called it, the asylum of ignorance. When causes are unknown "God" is brought forward. When causes are known "God" retires into the background. "God" is not an explanation, it is a narcotic.

The argument from design rests upon the existence in nature of adaptations either general or special. And quite obviously the value of evidence derived from adaptations will be determined by the existence of non-adaptations. If, that is, it can be shown that a certain assemblage of forces produce adaptation, while in another instance they fail to produce it, it would then be logical to argue that the difference was due to the directive power being withdrawn in the latter case. But that as we know is never the case. What we see is always the same conditions producing the same effects. We are never able to say, "Here are natural forces working _minus_ a directing intelligence, and here is an assemblage of the same forces working _plus_ the addition of a directing intelligence." If we could do that we should be able to attribute the difference to the new factor. But this we are never able to do. And it is an elementary principle of scientific method that before we can assert the existence of a distinct force or factor, the possibility of isolation must be shown. Adaptation can, then, only be demonstrated by non-adaptation. And _non-adaptation in nature simply does not exist, except in relation to an ideal end created by ourselves_.

Surprising as this may appear to some, examination shows it to be no more than a truism, and that granted, the whole strength of the argument from adaptation, whether in the inorganic or the organic world, disappears.

To see the matter the more clearly, let us drop for a time the word "adaptation" and substitute the word "process." For that after all is what nature presents us with. We see processes and we see results. It is because we create an _end_ for these processes that we class them as well or ill adapted to achieve it. We make a gun, and say it is ill or well made as it shoots well or ill. But whether it carries straight or not the relation of the shooting to the construction of the gun remains the same. Judging the gun merely from its construction, the product answers completely to the combination of its parts. Constructed in one way the gun cannot but shoot straight. Constructed in another way the gun cannot but shoot crookedly. And the only reason we have for calling one good and the other bad is that _we_ desire a particular result. But the goodness or badness has nothing to do with the thing itself. Its adaptation to the end produced is as perfect in the one case as in the other. It could produce no other result than the one that actually emerges without an alteration in the means employed. A thing is what it is because it is the combination of all the forces that produce it. And to ask us to marvel at the result of a process, when the one is the product of the other is like asking us to express our surprise that twice two equal four. Twice two equal four because four is the sum of the factors, and no one dreams of praising God because they don't sometimes make four and a half. The argument from adaptations in nature is, when examined, just about as impressive as the reasoning of the curate who saw the hand of Providence in the fact that death came at the end of life instead of in the middle of it.

Adaptation is not, then, a singular fact in nature, but a universal one. It is everywhere, in the case of death as in that of life. It is the same in the case of a child born a marvel of health and beauty as in that of one born deformed and diseased. There is nothing else but adaptations of means to ends in nature, however displeasing some of them may be to us. The "harmony" which the theist perceives in nature is not the expression of "plan," it is the inevitable outcome of the properties of existence. Given matter and force, and it requires no "directive intelligence" to produce the existing order, it would indeed require a God to prevent its occurrence.

It is the same if we take the case of animal life alone. To say that animal life is adapted to its environment, and to say that animal life exists, is to say the same thing in two ways. Whether animal forms are fashioned by "divine intelligence" or not, the fact of adaptation remains; for adaptation is the essential condition of existence. And as adaptation is the condition of existence, it follows that an animal's feelings, structure, and functions will be developed in accordance with

the nature of the environment. If the conditions of existence were different from what they are animal life would show corresponding modifications. But all the same we should observe the same correspondence between animal life and its surroundings. Here, again, we have a fact transformed, without the slightest warranty, into a purpose.

Now, if the theist could prove that out of a number of equally possible lines of development living beings show one fixed form, and that against the compulsion of environmental forces, he would do something to prove the probability of some sort of guidance. But that we know cannot be done. The forms of life are infinite in number. They vary within all possible limits; and always in terms of environmental conditions. In brief, what is said to occur with God, can be shown to be inevitable without him. "God" in nature is a wholly gratuitous hypothesis.

Later it will be seen that the whole basis of the argument from design is fallacious; that it proceeds along altogether wrong lines, and that the final objection to it is that it is completely irrelevant to the point at issue. For the moment, however, we proceed with a criticism of the argument as usually stated.

It must be borne in mind that what the theist desires to reach is a _Creator_, but it is obvious that this plea can never give us more than a mere designer working on materials that already exist. Of necessity design implies two things, difficulties to be overcome, and skill or wisdom in overcoming them. Design is an understandable thing in connection with man, because man is always occupied in overcoming the resistance of forces that exist quite independently of him, and which operate without reference to his needs or desires. But it would be absurd to assume design on the part of one for whom difficulties had no existence, or on the part of one who himself created the forces that had to be overcome, and endowed them with all the properties which made the work of design necessary. Granting the relevance of the data upon which the belief in design rests, one could only assume, with Mill, that "the author of the Cosmos worked under limitations; that he was obliged to adapt himself to conditions independent of his will, and to attain his ends by such arrangements as these conditions admitted of."

In the next place, the argument for design is an argument from analogy, and an analogy can by its very nature never give a complete demonstration. It can never offer more than a probability, more or less convincing as the analogy is more of less complete. But in the case under consideration the analogy is considerably less rather than more. Paley's classical illustration--taken almost verbatim from Malebranche, but as old otherwise as the days of Greek philosophy, where a statute took its place--was that of a watch. And the conclusion was drawn that as the parts of a watch bear obvious marks of having been made with a view to a particular end, so the animal structure and the universe as a whole bear similar marks of having been designed. It is true that of late years the Paleyan form of the argument has been disavowed by most scholarly advocates of theism, but as they immediately proceed to make use of arguments that are substantially identical with it, the repudiation does not seem of great consequence. It reminds one of a government that is compelled by the force of public opinion to openly repudiate one of its officials, and having removed him from the office in which the misdemeanour was committed, immediately appoints him to one of an increased dignity and with a larger salary.

Thus, we have Professor Fiske saying that "Paley's simile of a watch is no longer applicable to such a world as this" ("Idea of God"; p. 131), and Prof. Sorley telling us that "the age of Paley and of the Bridgewater Treatises is past" (Moral Values and the Idea of God; p. 327), and Mr. Balfour repudiating Paley as having been ruled out of court by Darwinism ("Humanism and Theism," chapter II.). But as Fiske puts the flower in the place of the watch, Sorley, the moral nature of man, and Balfour, the conditions of animal life, it is not quite clear why if the Paleyan argument is invalid, the new form is any more intellectually respectable. The essence of the Paleyan argument was the assertion of a mind behind phenomena, the workings of which could be seen in the forms of animal life. And whether we find that proof in the growth of a flower, or in the moral sense of man, or in the creation of natural conditions that impel the development of life along a certain road, the distinction is not vital. We are still finding proofs of God in the structure of the world (where otherwise, indeed, are we to find

it?) and we are still depending on the supposed likeness between the works of human intelligence and natural products.

And that analogy is wholly false. The argument from design aims at proving that _all_ things are made by a creative intelligence. It is not merely animals that are designed; they are selected as no more than striking individual examples of a general truth. Everything, if theism be true, must be ultimately due to manufacture. But the whole significance of the Paleyan argument from design is that behind the manufactured article which we recognise as such, there are other articles or other things that are not manufactured. The traveller, says Paley, who comes across a watch recognises in the relation of its parts evidences of workmanship. But he does not see in the breaking of a wave on the shore, or in the piling up of sand in the desert, or in a pebble on the beach, the same tokens of workmanship. In the very act of attempting to prove that _some_ things _are_ made, the theist is compelled to assume that _all_ things are not made. He can only gain a victory at the price of confessing a defeat.

But is there any real analogy between the works of man and the universe at large? Let us take a familiar example. It is, we are told in a very familiar illustration, as absurd to imagine that the world as it exists is the work of unguided natural forces, as it would be to believe that the rows of letters in a compositor's "stick" had of their own contained force arranged themselves in intelligible sentences. The absurdity of the last supposition is admitted, but why is that so? Obviously because we have the previous knowledge that the type itself is a manufactured thing, and that its arrangement in orderly sentences is the work of intelligent men. Thus, what occurs when we come across a particular example of type setting is that we compare our present experience with other experiences and recognise it as belonging to a particular class. So with the watch. The only reason we have for believing that a watch is made is that of our previous knowledge that such things are made. The present judgment is based upon past experience. But the case of animal forms, and still more the universe at large, offers no such analogy. We know nothing of world makers nor of animal makers. We have no previous experience to go upon, nor have we any things of a similar kind, known to be made, with which we can compare them. Instead of the points of resemblance between the two things being so numerous as to compel belief, they agree in one particular only, that of existence. At most all we are left with is the palpably absurd position that because man selects and adjusts means to a given end, therefore any combination of forces in nature which produce a certain result must also be the expression of conscious intention.

Some apparent force even to this flimsy conclusion might be given if nature could be said to be working towards a given end. But we do not find this. What we see is a multitude of forces at work, the action of each of which often results in the negation of the other. Put on one side the larger, but not the least pregnant fact that animal life is only maintained in the face of numerous agencies, inorganic and organic, that are apparently bent upon its destruction; put on one side also the fact that multitudes of parasites--as much the result of design as any other form of life--are constantly preying upon and destroying forms of life higher than themselves, and there still remain myriads of facts altogether inconsistent and completely irreconcilable with the hypothesis of a creative intelligence shaping the course of affairs to a given end. To take only one illustration of this. What is to be said of the myriads of animals that are born into the world only to perish before reaching an age at which they can play their part in the perpetuation of the species? Are we to believe that the same deity who fashioned these forms of life created at the same time a number of forces that were certain to destroy them? Clearly we are bound to assume, either that this hypothetical Being pursues a number of mutually destructive plans, or that there are a number of designers at work and at war with each other, or that none at all exist.

If we are to judge nature from the standpoint of human intelligence, then we must logically decide that it is full of waste, full of bungling, full of plans that come to nothing, of ends that are never realised, of pain and misery that might have been avoided by the exercise of almost ordinary intelligence. There are few animals concerning which a competent anatomist or physiologist could not suggest some improvement in their construction by which their functions might be

more efficiently performed. Nor does it seem quite impossible to have so adjusted natural forces that the development of life might have been accomplished without the present enormous waste of material. It is almost stupid to ask, as did the late Dr. Martineau, what right have we to judge the world from "a purely humanistic point of view." The whole argument from design is based upon a humanistic point of view. The Atheist is only calling the attention of the theist to the consequences of his own argument.

I leave for a later chapter, the moral aspect of the design argument. I am at present concerned with its purely logical presentation. And the crowning charge here is not that it is inconclusive, not that it falls short, as Mill thought, of a complete analogy, the decisive rejection of it is based upon the fact that it is absolutely irrelevant. The argument has no bearing on the issue; the evidence has no relation to the case. What is the essence of the argument from design? It is based upon certain adaptations that are observed to exist. But adaptation is, as we have shown, a universal quality of existence. It exists in every case, and no more in one case than in another. And when the theist says that because certain things work together therefore god arranged it, an apt query is, How do you know? One may even say, Granting there is a God, how do you know that what is was actually designed by him? It is no use replying that the way things work together prove design, for things always work together. They cannot do otherwise. Any group of forces work together to produce a given result. That is part of the universal fact of adaptation which the theist holds up as though it were a divine miracle instead of, as Mallock says, a physical platitude.

Let us take an illustration from everyday life. A man tries his hand at building a bicycle. When it is finished the wheels are not true, the frame is unsteady, the whole thing is ready to fall to pieces and is absolutely unrideable. Is any one warranted in declaring that because the parts have all been brought together by me therefore the resulting machine was an act of design? Clearly not. What I designed was a machine perfect after its kind. What appeared was the miserable structure that is before us. On the other hand that machine with all its imperfections might have been designed by me. I might, for some purpose deliberately have intended to make a machine that would not carry a rider. And when would anyone be logically justified in saying which of the two kinds of machines express my design? Clearly, only when he had a knowledge of my intention. Apart from a knowledge of an intention preceding an act the inference of design is unwarrantable.

Now, assuming the existence of a God, and who stands in the same relation to the world that I do to the machine, how can anyone know that the world as it is expresses design any more than did my home-made bicycle? In this case, as in the former, what is needed to justify the assumption of design is a knowledge of intention. One must know what the assumed maker intended and then see how far the actual result realises it.

Design, in short, although it may be expressed in a physical form is not a physical thing, but a psychic fact. You cannot by examining physical processes and results reach design. You cannot start with a material fact and reach intention. You must begin with intention and compare it with the physical result. Things may be as they are whether design is involved or not. It is only by a knowledge of intention, and a comparison of that with the fact before us that we can be certain of design. Proof of design is not found in the capacity of certain clusters of circumstances or forces to realise a particular result, but in a knowledge that they correspond with an intention which we know to have existed before the result occurs.

To warrant a logical belief in design in nature three things are essential. First, one must assume that a God exists. Second, one must take it for granted that one has a knowledge of the intention in the mind of the deity before the alleged designed thing is brought into existence. Finally, one must be able to compare the result with the intention and demonstrate their agreement. But the impossibility of knowing the first two things is apparent. And without the first two the third is of no value whatever. For we have no means of reaching the first except through the third. And until we get to the first we cannot make use of the third. We are thus in a hopeless impasse. No examination of nature can lead back to God because we lack the necessary starting

point. All the volumes that have been written, and all the sermons that have been preached depicting the wisdom of organic structures are so much waste of paper and breath. They prove nothing, and can prove nothing. They assume at the beginning all they require at the end. Their God is not something reached by way of inference, it is something assumed at the very outset.

What the theist does at every step of his reasoning is to read his own feelings and desires into nature. The design he talks so glibly about is in him, not outside of him. As well might a maggot in a cheese argue that the world was designed for him because the agreement between his structure and it are so harmonious. In relation to their surroundings man and the maggot are in the same position. And in the economy of nature man is of no more consequence than the maggot. There is a more complex synthesis of forces here than there, a more subtle exhibition of nature's infinite capacity for evolving fresh forms of life, and that is all. It is man himself who paints a distorted picture of himself on the surface of things, who reads his own passions and desires into nature, and then admires a marvel created by himself. To he who correctly visualises the process of the evolution of deity, the existence of God is hardly to-day a question for discussion. There is a discussion only of the history of the belief, and in that is found its strongest condemnation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISHARMONIES OF NATURE.

It has already been indicated that it is not really necessary, in order to prove design, to establish the fact that the design is perfect or that it exhibits complete goodness. It is enough that there be design. Its moral quality or value is quite another question. Nevertheless, it will be as well to deal with this latter aspect of the subject, and to see what kind of "plan" it is that nature does exhibit, even assuming the existence of some design.

Now it is evident that if there be design in nature, and if the design is the expression of a single supreme mind one quality of that plan should be unity. The products should, so to speak, dovetail into each other in such a way that they work together, and even harmonise with each other. But this is, notoriously, not the case. If from one point of view there is a certain harmony throughout the world of living beings in virtue of which life is preserved, it is at least equally true that from another point of view the harmony is one of destruction. And in the end death wins. Sooner or later death overtakes all forms of life, while in the grand total of living beings born into the world, a far larger number perish than can reach maturity. Wasted effort is the mildest judgment that can be passed upon these abortive attempts. And not only does death eventually win in the case of each individual, and against which may be set the consideration that in the economy of nature death plays a part in the development of life, but eventually death will, if we are to trust science, reap a sweeping and universal triumph by the consummation of terrestrial conditions that will render the maintenance of life impossible.

Or, again, the relations of species are clearly not what we have a right to expect in the working out of a reasonably wise and benevolent plan. It is a general truth that, with the exception of a few instances, chiefly connected with the relations existing between insects and flowers, the development of one species in relation to another is not that of mutual helpfulness. The general rule here is that of mutual injury. The carnivora prey on the herbivora and upon each other; and the herbivora crush each other by methods that are as effective as the method of direct attack. Any variation is "good" provided it be of advantage to its possessor. And the "good" of the one kind may mean the destruction of another order. All the exquisite design shown in the development of the finer feelings of man, and upon which theistic sentimentalists love to dwell, may be seen in the structure of those parasites which destroy man and bring his finer feelings to naught. The late Theodore Roosevelt says of the Brazilian forests:--

> In these forests the multitude of insects that bite, sting, devour, and prey on other creatures, often with accompaniments of atrocious suffering, passes belief. The very pathetic myths of beneficent nature could not deceive even the least wise being if he once saw the iron cruelty of life in the tropics. Of course, "nature"--in common parlance a wholly inaccurate term, by the way, especially when used to express a single entity--is entirely ruthless, no less so as regards types than as regards individuals, and entirely indifferent to good or evil, and works out her ends or no ends with utter disregard of pain and woe (Cited by E. D. Fawcett in _The World as Imagination_; pp. 571-2).

And Mr. Carveth Reade expresses the same thing in a more elaborate summing up:--

> The merciless character of organic evolution appears to us, first, in reckless propagation and the consequent destruction. Every species is as prolific as it can be compatibly with the development of its individuals; and the deaths that ensue from inanition, disease, violence, present a stupefying scene. The best one can say for it is that, as life rises in the organic scale, the death rate declines. Yet even man still suffers outrageously by violence, disease, inanition; the notion that "Malthus's Law" no longer holds of civilised man is a foolish delusion. But more sinister than the direct destruction of life is the spectacle of innumerable species profiting by a life, parasitic or predatory, at the expense of others. The parasites refute the vulgar prejudice that evolution is by the measure of man, progressive; adaptation is indifferent to better or worse, except as to each species, that its offspring shall survive by atrophy and degradation. The predatory species flourish as if in derision of moral maxims; we see that though human morality is natural to man, it is far from expressing the whole of Nature. Animals, at first indistinguishable vegetables, devour them and enjoy a far richer life. Animals that eat other animals are nearly always superior not only in strength, grace and agility but in intelligence. There are exceptions to this rule; some snakes eat monkeys (thanking Providence), and the elephant is content with foliage; but compare cats and wolves with the ungulates that make a first concoction of herbs for their sake. It is true that our monkey kin are chiefly frugivorous; for it may be plausibly argued that man was first differentiated by becoming definitely carnivorous, a sociable hunter, as it were, a wolf-ape. Hence the advantage of longer legs, the use of weapons, the upright gait and defter hands to use and make weapons, more strategic brains, tribal organisation, and hence liberation from the tropical forest, and citizenship of the world. The greater part of his subsequent history is equally unedifying: having made the world his prey, he says that God made the world to that end, and those who have preyed upon their fellows, and enslaved them, and flourished upon it, have declared that to have been the intention of nature. (_The Metaphysics of Nature_; pp. 344-5).

A perpetual pulling down and building up, and the building altogether dependent upon the demolition. The tiger built with tastes and capacities for catching the gazelle: the gazelle built with capacities that enable it to escape the tiger. There is no evidence here of the existence of a single mind working out an intelligent plan. At most we have either the proof for a number of warring powers, each one striving to destroy what the other is striving to create, or a single mind that has deliberately fashioned things so that each part may work for the destruction of the other part, the whole to presently end in a grand catastrophe.

But that is not all. If we limit our attention to man, can it be said that we find in the human structure what we might reasonably expect to find if man be indeed the crown of the divine plan, the event to which, for untold ages, all things were designedly tending? What we actually do find is that the structure of man, physically and mentally, is such as to altogether negative the notion of complete or harmonious adjustment

to environment. That the human has within it a large number of vestigial structures--some scientists place it as high as one hundred and seventy--is now well known, and forms at the same time one of the evidences of evolution and an impeachment of the theistic theory. There is only need to instance now the vermiform appendage, which forms the seat of appendicitis, the "wisdom" teeth, of very little use, and one of the most fruitful of causes of disease of the teeth, the hair which covers the human body, now of no use whatever, except to form a lodgment for microbes, and so makes the acquisition of disease the more certain. In addition to the number of rudimentary organs that actually encourage disease--Metchnikoff counts among these the larger intestine--the body is full of rudimentary muscles and structures that when not positively harmful, impose a tax on the organism for which no corresponding service is performed.

The meaning and significance of these structures are, however, so well recognised that one need not dwell upon their existence. Not so well known is the complementary fact that just as in his physical structure man bears evidence of his emergence from lower forms of life, which result in a certain degree of disharmony between him and an ideal environment, so in his psychic life his instincts and feelings are often such as to prevent that ideal adaptation which so many desire. The earlier conception of optimistic evolutionists that the instincts of man were, through the operation of natural selection, converted into beneficent guides is quite faulty. In itself this was probably a survival of the theism which tried to prove that this was the best of all possible worlds, and which led evolutionists to try and prove that their theory was also ethically desirable. At any rate, the theory of the wholly beneficent nature of human instincts is not tenable. Our instincts are inherited from our animal ancestors; they were brought to fruition under conditions different in form from those which obtain with human beings, with the result that whether an instinct is helpful or the contrary depends largely upon the educational quality of the environment, and even then inherited tendencies may be so strong as to make them a source of danger to the community rather than of benefit.

It is noted, for example, that a deal of what may be called crime, or at least lawlessness, is the result of an individual being born with tendencies developed in a way that fits him for an environment of centuries ago, rather than an environment of to-day. Very many of our national heroes of a few centuries ago would rank as criminals to-day, just as many of our criminals to-day would, had they been born a few centuries since, have been handed down to us as examples of chivalry or of national heroism. Instead of what one may call the natural endowments of man pointing towards a more civilised form of life, they point to a less civilised form, while it is the artificially or socially induced feelings and ideas that point to a better future.

Thus, if we take the primitive or brute feeling of retaliation we find it assuming the form of war. And without discussing the value of war in the past, or even its admissibility in special circumstances in the present, I do not think it will be seriously disputed that the great need of the present is to transfer that feeling from the lower level of brute force to the higher one of adventure in the interests of science and human betterment. Here it is not the existence of a lofty "god-given" endowment that puts man out of harmony with his environment; it is, on the contrary, the operation of an earlier form of feeling manifestation which retards the coming of a better day.

There is, in fact, not a single quality of human nature that can be said to act with inerrancy. The baby seizes objects indiscriminately and puts them in its mouth. The man falling into the water does the very thing he should not do--throws up his arms. Intense cold lulls to somnolency, instead of rousing to activity. The love of children, on which the preservation of the race depends, is absent with many; while with others the sexual instinct undergoes strange and morbid manifestations. A complete list of these disharmonies would fill a volume--indeed, Metchnikoff, in his "Nature of Man," has filled half a volume with describing some of the instances of physiological disharmony, and then has not exhausted the list.

It would indeed seem as if nature, with its method of never creating a new organ or structure, but only transforming and utilising an old one, had attached a penalty to every successful attempt to rise above a

certain level. If man will walk upright she sees to it that his doing so shall involve a great liability to hernia. If he will live in cities, she has ready the ravage of consumption. If he will use clothing she makes him carry round a coating of useless hair as a method of trapping disease microbes. So soon as one disease is conquered another is discovered. Pleasures have their reverse side in pains, and to some pains the pleasures bear a small relation, being chiefly of the character of the pains being absent. As a social animal man is only imperfectly adapted to the state, there going on a constant warfare between his egoistic and altruistic impulses. In fact, it would certainly be an arguable proposition, if we allow intention in nature, to say that man was intended to remain at the animal level, and that, having so far defeated nature's intention, he is dogged by a disappointed creator, and made to pay the fullest price that can be exacted for every step of progress achieved.

Of course, of proof of design in nature there is positively none. Design, as I have said, is not a natural fact, but a purely human construction. But, if admitted, it is a two edged weapon. For, if assumed anywhere, it must be assumed to exist everywhere. And designing intelligence must be made responsible for the whole scheme. But this the most extravagant piety refuses to do. Either we have the primitive theory of a devil who divides with God the responsibility for the state of the world, or we have the plea that evil may be only good disguised, or good in the making, or it is argued that we have to contemplate the "plan" as a whole, and must wait for some future state to pass judgment. And whichever view we take, there is the implied admission that the plan of creation as we know it cannot be harmonised with the theory of God that modern theism places before us. And instead of man being the miracle of perfection that an earlier generation saw in his structure, we know that the human structure is such that, given the power to create, science could really fashion, in the light of its present knowledge, a better organism.

Finally, disharmony is implied in and necessitated by the very fact of progress. Progress means a better adjustment, and the discomfort of maladjustment is the spur to improvement. A perfect equilibrium is as impossible as perpetual motion, and it is only with a perfect equilibrium that change, which is the condition of progress, would cease. The ceaseless desire for something better is, therefore, in itself an impeachment of things as they are. It is an indication of there being something wanting, of the existence of a want of complete harmony between man and his surroundings. Nor is the case of the theist bettered if he retorts that without the sense of imperfection or of dissatisfaction there would be no such thing as a conscious striving after improvement. That may be admitted, but that is only proving that perfection can never be achieved, and that even in this last resort "God" has so designed things as to make a mock of man at the end. The want of complete harmony that is seen in the physical structure of man is carried over into his mental life. If theism be true man is mocked by a mirage. And the knowledge is made the more depressing by the belief that the plan is not accidental, it is not a product of the working of non-conscious forces, it is the preordained outcome of a plan that was deliberately resolved on by a being with full power to devise some thing wiser and better. At the side of that, any theory of things is, by comparison, hopeful and inspiring.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOD AND EVOLUTION.

There is no logical connection between what is called the "Moral government of the universe" and the belief in God, but it must be confessed that the criticism of the belief from the point of view of moral feeling is of considerable importance. This is in itself a striking illustration of the reaction of social developments on religious beliefs. For there is originally no connection between morality and the belief in God. Man does not believe in the gods because they are moral, but because they are there. If they are, to his mind, good, that is so much the better. But whether they are good or bad they

have to be faced as facts. The gods, in short belong to the region of belief, while morality belongs to that of practice. It is in the nature of morality that it should be implicit in practice long before it is explicit in theory. Morality belongs to the group and is rooted in certain impulses that are a product of the essential conditions of group life. It is as reflection awakens that men are led to speculate upon the nature and origin of the moral feelings. Morality, whether in practice or in theory, is thus based upon what is. On the other hand, religion, whether it be true or false, is in the nature of a discovery. However crude or uninformed the thinking, the belief in God must be regarded as the product of reflection. The situation is not unfairly described by Dr. Jastrow:--

> The various rites practiced by primitive society in order to ward off evils, or to secure the protection of dreaded powers or spirits, are based primarily on logical considerations. If a certain stone is regarded as sacred, it is probably because it is associated with some misfortune, or some unusual piece of good luck. Someone sitting on the stone may have died; or on sleeping on it may have seen a remarkable vision, which was followed by a signal victory over a dangerous foe.... In all this, however, ethical considerations are remarkable for their absence.... Taking again so common a belief among all peoples as the influence for good or evil exerted by the dead upon the living and the numerous practices to which it gives rise ... it will be difficult to discover in these beliefs the faintest suggestion of any ethical influence. It is not the good but the powerful spirits that are invoked; an appeal to them is not made by showing them examples of kindness, justice, or noble deeds, but by bribes, flatteries, and threats. (_The Study of Religion_; Ch. VI.).

So we have Tylor also endorsing this opinion by remarking that, "The popular idea that the moral government of the universe is an essential tenet of natural religion simply falls to the ground. Savage animism is almost devoid of that ethical element which, to the educated, modern mind, is the very mainspring of religion." And Hoffding says that, "In the lowest forms of it with which we are acquainted religion cannot be said to have any ethical significance. The gods appear as powers on which man is dependent, but not as patterns of conduct or administrators of an ethical world order.... Not till men have discovered ethical problems in practical life and have developed an ethical feeling ... can the figures of the gods assume an ethical character." ("Philosophy of Religion"; pp. 323-4).

It is quite unnecessary to multiply evidence, the truth of the matter would seem obvious. One cannot conceive man actually ascribing ethical qualities to his gods before he becomes sufficiently developed to formulate moral rules for his own guidance, and to create moral laws for his fellow man. The moralisation of the gods will then follow as a matter of course. And thereafter we can plainly observe the operation of the moral sense on the belief in god, and upon the recognition of crude power. Man really modifies his gods in terms of the ideal human being. Paul's picture of a god who uses man as the potter uses his clay could never flourish in a society which believed in the "rights of man." And so soon as that conception developes so soon does man begin to revise his conception of god. So with almost every great change in the form of government or in the notions of right and wrong. In a slave state, God favours slavery. When slavery gives place to another form of labour the gods are equally vigorous in its condemnation. The history of the belief in witch burning, heresy hunting, eternal damnation, etc., all illustrate the same point--religious teachings are all modified and moralised in accordance with the changing moral conceptions of mankind. It is not the gods who moralise man, it is man who moralises the gods.

The gods have their beginnings as mere powers. They are feared because they are, not for the moral value of what they are. Social development does all the rest. But with that development the feeling of helplessness, of weakness, decays and there arises the demand that if god is to be worshipped he must prove worthy of it. The conviction arises very gradually, but it is there, and it becomes a powerful solvent of religious ideas. Merely to govern is not enough, God must govern well, and in terms of what we have come to understand by the word

"Justice." And to the minds of millions of moderns, when tried by that test the idea of god breaks down. That there is a god who rules the universe is one question; that he rules it well and in accord with what is understood when we talk of morality, is quite another. The two questions are quite distinct since the first might be true and the second false. We have already seen how slender are the grounds for believing in the first; we have now to show that the reasons for believing in the second are quite as unsatisfactory.

Theism has been defined as consisting in the belief in a God who is wise, powerful, and loving, and who has selected man as the object of his preferential care, and to this may be added the statement that most modern theists would extend that care to the whole of sentient life. "God's care" must be "over all his creatures," and although this care may be subservient to some wide and far-seeing plan, there must be nothing that looks like obvious carelessness or criminal neglect.

To what conclusion do the facts point when they are examined in the light of modern knowledge? Does the world supply us with the kind of picture that one would expect to see if it were really presided over by divine love under the guidance of divine wisdom, and backed by divine power? The proof that it does not is shown in the almost endless attempts made to harmonise the world as it is with the world as theory would have it be. And a theory that needs so much defending, explaining, and qualifying must have something radically weak about it. That there is evil in the world all admit, that it offers _prima facie_ objection to the theistic hypothesis is confessed by the many attempts made to fit in this evil with the existence of God, to prove that it works in some mysterious way for some larger good, or that its presence cannot be dispensed with profitably. The question of why the world is as it is with a god such as we are told exists, is, as Canon Green says, "the really vital question, for it touches the very heart of religion." ("The Problem of Evil"; p. 46.) How, then, does the Theist deal with it?

Broadly, two methods are adopted. In the one case we are presented with the order of the world, or the course of evolution, as indicative of a beneficent scheme. This claims to freely adopt all that science has to say concerning the development of life and to prove that this is in harmony with the legitimate demands of the moral sense. The second is the more orthodox way, and taking the world as it is, claims that pain and suffering play a disciplinary and educational part in the life of the individual. We will take these in the order named.

When dealing with the argument from design little was said concerning the evolutionary explanation of the special adaptations that meet us in the animal world. It was thought better to fix attention on the purely logical value of the argument presented. It is now necessary to look a little closer at the ethical implications of the evolutionary process.

It has been pointed out that all life involves a special degree of adaptation between an organism and its environment. Destroy that adjustment and life ceases to exist. How is that adjustment secured? The answer of the pre-Darwinian was that it represented a deliberate design on the part of God. Against this Darwinism propounds a theory of automatic or mechanical adjustment which makes the calling in of deity altogether gratuitous. And it remains gratuitous, no matter how far the scope of the theory of natural selection may be modified. But given the continuous variations which we know to exist with all kinds of life, given any sort of competition between animals as to which shall live, given even a degree of adaptation below which an animal cannot fall and live, and it is at once plain that the better adaptations will live and the poorer adapted will be eliminated. This process is analogous to that by which man has managed to breed so many varieties of domesticated animals and plants, some of the varieties presenting so marked a difference from the original type that if found in a state of nature they would often be classed as a distinct species. Man _selects_ the variation that pleases him, eliminates or segregates the type that does not, and by following up the process eventually produces a distinct and fixed variation. It was because of the likeness of what goes on in the case of the breeder to what we see actually going on in nature that Darwin used the phrase "Natural Selection" as descriptive of the process. It was not an exact phrase, and it was not meant to be exact. For one thing--a very important thing, while a breeder selects, nature eliminates. Man's action, in relation to the type preserved, is

positive. Nature's attitude in relation to the type preserved is negative. This is a very important distinction; and it is one that is fatal to the claims of theism. For if it points to a plan in nature it points to one that aims at killing off all that can be killed, and only sparing those who are able to protect themselves against its attack. And one is left wondering at the type of mind which can see goodness and wisdom in a plan that goes, on generation, after generation manufacturing an inferior or defective type in enormous numbers in order that a few superior specimens may be found, these in their turn to become inferior by the arrival of some other specimens a little more fortunate in their endowment. One hardly knows at which to marvel the most--at the clumsiness of the plan, or at the brutality of the design.

It was soon realised that the old argument from design was no longer possible. But if one can only get far enough away from the possibility of proof or disproof there is always a chance for the Goddite. So it was argued that inasmuch as natural selection meant the emergence of a "higher" type, and as there was no room for design within the process, might not the process itself be an expression of design? There might still be room for what Huxley, with one of those foolish concessions to established opinion which is the bane of English thought, called the "wider teleology." This was a teleology which placed a designing mind at the back of the evolutionary process, and arranging it with a view to a preconceived end. The process then becomes, to use Spencer's phrase, a "beneficent" one, since it eliminates the poorer specimens and leaves the better ones to perpetuate the species. We are thus asked to imagine a divine wisdom selecting the better and destroying the inferior much as an omniscient Eugenist might destroy at birth all human beings of an undesirable type.

The weakness of the thesis lies primarily in the fact that in the case of the breeder he has to take the animal as he finds it, subject to the play of forces, the characteristics of which are determined for him. He has to make the best of the situation. In the case of the deity he creates the animals with which he is assumed to be experimenting, he creates the forces with all their qualities, and thus determines the nature of the situation. Quite certainly no breeder would waste his time in breeding over a number of generations if he could secure the desired type at once. The whole of the argument of the advocate of the wider teleology is that God wanted the higher type. But if that is so why did he not produce it at once? What useful purpose could be served by producing at the end of a lengthy and murderous process what might just as well have been secured at the beginning? It is not wisdom but unadulterated stupidity to take thousands of years securing what might have been as well done in the twinkling of an eye.

There is, in short, no justification in the creation of a process so long as the end at which the process is aiming can be reached by a less tortuous method. As Mr. F. C. S. Schiller says:--

> So long as we are dealing with finite factors, the function of pain and the nature of evil can be more or less understood, but as soon as it is supposed to display the working of an infinite power everything becomes wholly unintelligible. We can no longer console ourselves with the hope that "good becomes the final goal of ill," we can no longer fancy that imperfection serves any secondary purpose in the economy of the universe. A process by which evil _becomes_ good is unintelligible as the action of a truly infinite power which can attain its end without a process; it is absurd to ascribe imperfection as a secondary result to a power which can attain all its aims _without_ evil. Hence the world process, and the intelligent purpose we fancy we detect in it must be illusory.... God can have no purpose, and the world cannot be in process.... If the world is the product of an infinite power it is utterly unknowable, because its process and its nature would be alike unnecessary and unaccountable. (_Riddles of the Sphinx_; pp. 318-19).

Besides, as I have already pointed out, in the process as it meets us in nature there is not a selection for preservation, but a selection for killing. With the breeder preservation is primary. It is of no value to him to kill, it is the preservation of a desired type that is all

important. In nature, so far as we can see, the whole aim is to destroy. It is not the fittest that are preserved so much as it is the unfittest that are killed. The fittest are left alive for no other apparent reason than that nature is unable to kill them. The truth of this is seen in the fact that where there is no death there is no evolution of a "higher" type. In the case of diseases that kill there is a gradual development of an immune type--which introduces the paradox that the healthiest diseases from which a race may suffer are those that are most deadly. Where a disease does not kill there is no development against it. It is the winnowing fan of death that makes for the development of animal life. And the correct picture of nature--if we must picture an intelligence behind it--would be that of an intelligence aiming at killing all, and only failing in its purpose because the natural endowment of some placed them beyond its power.

And, without examining the question begging word "higher," it may be said that natural selection does not make for the uniform covering of the earth with representatives of higher types. If in some parts of the world the higher have replaced the lower types, elsewhere the lower have replaced the higher. Natural selection, in fact, works without reference to whether the form which survives is "higher" or "lower." All that matters is adaptation. The germ of malaria renders whole tracts of the earth uninhabitable to those whom we consider representative of the higher culture. In other parts an alteration of the rainfall may crush out a civilisation, and leave a handful of nomadic tribes as the sole denizens of lands where once a lofty civilisation flourished. Throughout the whole of nature there is never the slightest indication that forces operate with the slightest reference to what we are accustomed to consider the higher interests of the race.

Moreover, from the standpoint of an apologetic theism, we are entitled to ask precisely what is meant by this justification of the evolutionary process in terms of the production of a higher type. The justification of a painful or a costly experience by an individual is two-fold. First, it is the only way, perhaps, in which certain things may be learned or accomplished, and, second, it is the individual who passes through the experience who benefits thereby. But suppose a person entered on a course of training with the absolute certainty that he would never survive it. Should we be justified in forcing the course on him? Clearly not. The whole would be regarded as a wasted effort and as an exhibition of gratuitous cruelty.

Now when we look closely at this evolutionary process, who is it that benefits thereby? In a vague way we speak of the race benefiting. But the race is made up of individuals, and while it may be said the individual benefits from the experience through which the race has passed, it cannot be truthfully said that he is the better because he has gained from experience. He does not pass through the discipline, he simply registers, so to speak, the result. And, therefore, so far as he is concerned, he is exactly in the position that the first man would have been had he possessed the endowment, social, and individual, which the present man has. There is no greater fallacy than that contained in the common saying that man learns through experience. Individually, so far as civilisation is concerned, that is not true. Were it true, civilisation would be impossible. If each man had to start where our primitive ancestors started, and learn from experience, we should end where the first generation of socialised human beings ended, and the generations of men would represent an endless series of first steps to which there would be no second ones. What the individual learns from experience is very little and would never serve to lift him from out the ranks of savagery. What he learns from the experience of the race is much, and gives the whole distinction between the civilised man and the savage. It is the discipline of the race, that experience which meets each of us in the form of traditions, counsels, institutions, etc., from which we get the really vital lessons of life. But if that is so the attempted justification of natural processes on the ground that God designed them as they are so that man might learn from experience breaks down. The individual does not so learn, but is presented with the products of the experience of others, and which he accepts in the vast majority of cases without even putting it to the test. And, therefore, the method by which man learns was open from the start. Had there been some _man_ who could have told us generations ago all that has been slowly discovered since, we should all have been the better for it, and we should have learned then exactly as we have learned since. And if God

was really anxious to teach us, what possible objection could there be to his teaching us in some such way? In other words, how can we justify the process if the result is possible by any other method?

The standpoint of the theist is that God develops the species in order to benefit the individual. But the order is that the individual is sacrificed to benefit the species--so far as any benefit can be traced. For it must be noted that it is not the individual who has passed through all the suffering, who has lived through the years of semi-animal life, or through the years of tyranny, that finally emerges strengthened and triumphant. It is a different individual altogether. The greatest benefit is secured by those who come latest, and who have done the least to secure it. The reward bears no relation to the personal desert. And at the end what happens? If we are to be guided by the lessons of science, we must believe that one day the human race will cease to exist, just as certainly as one day it began to exist. And what are we to think of the almighty wisdom and goodness which is responsible for all? An almighty intelligence designs a process to produce a perfect animal through the sufferings of myriads of other animals. It takes thousands and thousands of generations to complete the process, and meantime every year is bringing the whole plan nearer to extinction. Divine wisdom! Anything nearer complete stupidity and futility it would be difficult to conceive.

I know that at this point it will be said that I am leaving out of account the future life, and that the story of human growth is to be continued elsewhere. But that will certainly not meet all that has been said above. And it is a curious manner of meeting an objection based upon the only phase of existence that we know with assurance to tell us that our indictment will receive a complete refutation in another state of existence of which we know nothing at all. The reply is in itself an admission of the truth of the charges. If life admitted of a moral justification here there would be no need to appeal to some other life in which these blemishes are made good. If some other life is needed to correct the moral abnormalities of this one, then the indictment of the Atheist is justified. And one is left again wondering why, if almighty intelligence could make all things straight in the next world, why the same intelligence could not have made the necessary corrections in this one.

The truth is that the God of the evolutionary process is as much a myth as is the god of special creation. He has all the blemishes of the other one--one step removed. The Paleyan God had at least the merit of coming to close grips with his work. The evolutionary one shields himself behind the fact that the work is done by his agents, and then it is found that he created the agents for this special work and all that they do is the product of the qualities with which he endowed them. If anything the evolutionary deity is more objectionable than the older one. And if theists will examine nature candidly and with an open mind, they will see that it is so. I do not know that anyone has drawn a more truthful picture of natural processes as they appear from the point of view of being the product of a divine intelligence than has Mr. W. H. Mallock, and his picture is the more deadly as coming from a champion of theism. If, he says, theists will look the facts of the universe steadily in the face:

> What they will see will astonish them. They will see that if there is anything at the back of this vast process, with a consciousness and a purpose in any way resembling our own--a being who knows what he wants and is doing his best to get it--he is instead of a holy and all-wise God, a scatter-brained, semi-powerful, semi-impotent monster. They will recognise as clearly as they ever did the old familiar facts which seemed to them evidences of God's wisdom, love, and goodness; but they will find that these facts, when taken in connection with the others, only supply us with a standard in the nature of this Being himself by which most of his acts are exhibited to us as those of a criminal madman. If he had been blind, he had not sin; but if we maintain that he can see, then his sin remains. Habitually a bungler as he is, and callous when not actively cruel, we are forced to regard him, when he seems to exhibit benevolence, as not divinely benevolent, but merely weak and capricious, like a boy who fondles a kitten and the next moment sets a dog at it, and not only does his moral character fall from

> him bit by bit but his dignity disappears also. The orderly processes of the stars and the larger phenomena of nature are suggestive of nothing so much as a wearisome Court ceremonial surrounding a king who is unable to understand or to break away from it; whilst the thunder and whirlwind, which have from time immemorial been accepted as special revelations of his awful power and majesty, suggest, if they suggest anything of a personal character at all, merely some blackguardly larrikin kicking his heels in the clouds, not perhaps bent on mischief, but indifferent to the fact that he is causing it....
>
> The truth is, if we consider the universe as a whole, it fails to suggest a conscious and purposive God at all; and it fails to do so not because the processes of evolution as such preclude the idea that a God might have made use of them for a definite purpose, but because when we come to consider these processes in detail, and view them in the light of the only purposes they suggest, we find them to be such that a God who could deliberately have been guilty of them would be a God too absurd, too monstrous, too mad to be credible. (_Religion as a Credible Doctrine_; pp. 176-8).

As we have already seen, the attempt to find a plan in the processes of evolution breaks down hopelessly. On analysis, the supposed plan turns out to be nothing more than a perception of some sort of regularity, and as regularity is an inescapable condition of existence, all that it proves _is_ existence. On that point there is no dispute. And the moral justification of the cosmic process while intellectually indefensible, adds an element of moral repulsion. That the process as we know it is morally repugnant is shown by the appeal to the future, the request to suspend judgment till such time as the plan is completed, when it is hoped that the end will justify the means. God, it is trusted, will justify himself in the future. But in his anxiety to impress upon us the fact that God has a moral future the theist forgets that he has had a past, and that past is a black one. The uncounted generations of suffering in the past is not to be compensated by a probable happiness in the future. The myriads of organisms that have lived incomplete lives, and ended them in deaths of suffering are not cancelled by the probability that at some time, still in the future, a comparatively small number will lead lives of happiness. The record is there, "there is blood upon the hand," and not all the apologies of a self-convicted animism can ever wipe it clean.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN.

The problem of how to harmonise the existence of a God as believers picture him to be with a world such as experience discloses, is as old as theology. And the problem will disappear only when theology is given up as an aggregate of question begging words and gratuitous hypotheses based upon a foundation of primitive ignorance and inherited delusion. For the majority of those questions that are properly called theological are not of the necessary order. Questions such as those connected with the mutations of matter, the development of life, the growth of society, or the nature and clash of human passions cannot be evaded. They are present in the facts themselves. But the problems of theology are self-created; they arise out of certain beliefs, and have no existence apart from those beliefs. They are the joint product of beliefs which are wholly useless, in conflict with facts with which they cannot be squared.

What is known as "The Problem of Evil" is an apt illustration of the truth of what has been said. Here there is created a problem which is not alone quite gratuitous, but it succeeds in inverting the real question at issue. For unless we accept the world as the product of a good and wise God, there is no problem of evil for us to explain. The problem of evil is, given such a deity, how to account for the existence of evil, or, if it exists, how account for its continuance. The problem is created by the theory. Dismiss the theory and no problem is left.

And it is in line with what is done in other directions, that, having created the difficulty, the theist should present it to the non-theist as one of the questions that he must answer.

In reality there is no problem of evil in connection with ethics. The ethical problem is not the existence of evil, but the emergence of good; not, that is, why do men do wrong, but why do they do right. That life should cease to be is not at all wonderful, but that with so many potential dangers around the organism, the actions of living beings should become so automatically adapted to their surroundings as to shun the actions which destroy life, and perform such actions as maintain it--at least, to such an extent as secures the preservation of the species--may well arouse surprise and give birth to enquiry. So with the question of evil and suffering in the world. That these exist is undeniable, but the enquiry they suggest is only on all fours with the enquiry suggested by any other natural fact, while the ethical problem centres, not around the existence of wrong action, but around the emergence of right conduct. It is the evolution of happiness that forms the kernel of the ethical problem, not the evolution of pain.

The earlier form of the Christian apologetic took the form of a dualistic theory of the world. There were two powers, God and the devil, and between them they shared the responsibility for all good and evil. So far, good. But this was clearly saving the goodness of God at the expense of his omnipotence. Moreover, if God was to be thought of as the creator of the universe, the theory, as Mill said, paid him the doubtful compliment of making him the creator of Satan, and, therefore, the creator of evil once removed. Or, if not, God and the devil were left as rival monarchs quarrelling over a territory that appeared to exist apart from and independent of either.

But nowadays the devil has gone out of fashion. Very few of the clergy ever mention him, and although an attempt was made to reinstate him some years ago by the author of "Evil and Evolution," the endeavour was a failure. And bereft of the convenient scapegoat, the devil, the present day theist is compelled to attempt an apology for evil that will appeal to natural and verifiable facts for confirmation, or which must, at least, not be in conflict with them. If theism is to stand, a place and a meaning must be found for the evil in the world, and found in such a way that it either relieves God of the responsibility for its existence or its being can be shown to harmonise with his assumed character. It is no longer possible to fall back on Paul's position that the potter is at liberty to doom one pot to honour and the other to dishonour. The moral responsibility for the kind of pots he turns out cannot be so easily evaded. As Professor Sorley says, "If ethical theism is to stand, the evil in the world cannot be referred to God in the same way as the good is referred to him." Somehow, he must be relieved of the responsibility for its existence, or a purpose for it must be found.

Now, curiously enough, modern theists hover between the two positions. Professor Sorley, representing one position, says that the only way to avoid referring evil to God is by "the postulate of human freedom." ("Moral Values and the Idea of God," p. 469.) This is also the way out adopted by Canon Green in "The Problem of Evil," and it turns upon a mere play on words. Thus, Canon Green says that there is one thing God could not do. "He could not force him to be good, i.e., to choose virtue freely, for the idea of forcing a free being to choose involves a contradiction." And Professor Sorley says more elaborately that "things occur in the universe which are not due to God's will, although they must have happened with his permission ... a higher range of power and perfection is shown in the creation of free beings than in the creation of beings whose every thought and action are pre-determined by their Creator," and while he admits there is limitations to man's power of choice, he holds that there is one form of choice that is always there, and that is the choice of good and evil. ("Moral Values and the Idea of Good," pp. 469-70.)

In all this one can see little more than verbal confusion. To commence with Canon Green, which will also cover much that Prof. Sorley says on the same point. When we are told man must choose virtue freely in order that what he does shall partake of the character of morality, it is plain that he is using the word "forced" in two senses. In the one sense force may mean no more than a determinant. Thus we may say that our sympathies _force_ us to act in such and such a way. Or the religious

man may say that the love of God forces him to act in such and such a manner. Force here means any consideration that will lead to action, and no one can object to its use in this sense.

A second meaning of force is that of compulsion from without, as when a strong man gets hold of a weak one and by exertion of physical strength compels him to do something that he is disinclined to do, or when one forces another by threat of punishment. In this latter sense no one dreams of harmonising force with moral action. Neither law nor common sense does so. But compulsion in the sense of one's actions being forced by a mental or moral disposition no one outside an asylum would dispute. And what Canon Green does is to ask us to reject the idea of a moral action being forced, in the sense of external compulsion, and then uses it in the sense of an absence of dispositions that will lead to certain courses of conduct.

It is probable that the Canon would reject this interpretation of his statement, but if it does not mean this, then his argument is unintelligible. For if it is admitted that what man does is the product of his mental or moral dispositions, in other words, of his nature, and if, as is undeniable, the nature with which he fronts the world is the product of heredity and environment, he would no more be "forced" to do good had God given him impulses strong enough to overcome all tendency to evil than he is now when his impulses come to him from his ancestors and his general social heredity.

All that is implied in a moral act is free choice. But choice is free, not when it is independent of organic promptings; that is absurd; but when those organic promptings are allowed to find expression. There is no other rational meaning to "choice" than this. Choice does not tell us how it is determined, on that point it can say nothing, any more than a child can say why it chooses sugar in preference to cayenne pepper. Its choice, we say, is determined by its taste. And its taste is determined by--? To answer that question we must call in the chemist and the physiologist, and they probably will tell us why our choice moves in one direction rather than in another.

When men like Canon Green talk of the morality of an action being dependent upon our _choice_ between right and wrong, what they probably have in their minds is the perception of right and wrong. For we may perceive the possibility of one course while we are performing another. But the power of choice is clearly limited. A man cannot choose to be a mathematician, however much he may see the desirability of becoming one. And many a man may in the moral sphere see the advisability of his being different in character from what he is, but may altogether lack the capacity of becoming such. And the power of choice differs not only with each individual, but with the same individual at different times. Finally, the more fixed the character of the individual the less conscious he is of choice, or of a sense of freedom to do differently from what he actually does, and as this applies with equal force to character, whether it be good or bad, we reach, finally, the suicidal position that the more fundamentally moral a man becomes, the less moral he is.[5]

Now seeing that all our educational processes aim at making the good character, so to speak, automatic, that is, to quite fill the mind with worthy motives and wise power of choice, and seeing also that a character is good so far as this is done, will some one explain in what way moral character would have suffered had God so made man that he would have had intelligence enough to always choose the good and reject the bad? For, be it noted, the apology put forward for the present state of affairs is that man is in a state of probation, he is passing through a course of moral discipline, and it is essential that he should experience the possibility to do wrong, and even to occasionally do the wrong. And the end of the process of tuition is, what? The production of a perfect being in whom there shall not be a proneness to do wrong, to whose purified moral nature wrong doing shall be quite foreign. That is to say that we are to reach as a result of this long roundabout process, with all its waste and bungling, just what might have been established at the beginning. For either the perfect moral being is without the quality which we have just been assured is essential to morality, or the whole argument is reduced to nonsense.

For it is impossible to assume that the bad man chooses to be bad with a

full perception of the consequences of his actions, and at the same time with the power to do otherwise. We all agree that the _right_ choice is ultimately a _wise_ choice, and that if we could all trace out the consequences of all we do, we should realise that it was to our real interest to act rightly. And if that is admitted, it follows that the "choice" to do evil is the product of short-sightedness, or of some defect of temperament which prevents our standing up against the temptations of the moment. And our ethical education is mainly directed to making good this defect in our make up. But suppose that amount of wisdom or strength had been an endowment of our nature from the outset, is there any conceivable way in which we should have been the worse for it? For even as it is there are some people who do make a fairly wise and right choice, and whose high-water mark of excellence is not reached through the crime and folly of the revival meeting convert. Are they the worse because they have never yielded to evil? Is the naturally good man really a less worthy character than the one whose comparative goodness is only reached through and after a lengthy course of evil living? And if not, in what way would the race have been worsened had we all been as fortunately circumstanced? If it was really God's purpose to have a race of men and women who should be both good and wise, it remains for the theist to show in what way the plan would not have been as well served by making them at once with a sufficiency of intelligence to act in the real interests of themselves and of all around them.

Coming closer to earth the theist attempts to find a justification for the existing order of things by finding a use for pain and suffering in their educational influence on human nature, and in the impossibility of altering for the better the consequences of natural law.

The real question at issue, says one of the most eloquent of modern theists, the late Dr. Martineau, is "whether the laws of which complaint is made work such harm that they ought never to have been enacted; or whether, in spite of occasional disasters in their path, the sentient existence of which they are the conditions has in its history a vast excess of blessing." (Study of Religion II., p. 91.) And Canon Green, who uses some of Dr. Martineau's ideas without the latter's eloquence or power of reasoning, asks, "If God were to say, 'You condemn me for this suffering! Well, take my creative power and re-create the world to please yourself and to suit your own sense of justice and mercy'" could we think out a world that should be better than this one? (Problem of Evil, p. 48.)

Now both these methods of raising the question--and they are representative of a whole group--serve but to confuse the issue. For no one denies that some benefit may result from the present cosmical structure. But that does not touch the complaint that the structure is not such as fits in with the existence of a presiding intelligence such as theism asks us to accept. And the question of Canon Green's whether we could turn out a better universe than the one that actually exists, is wide of the mark also. If I purchase a motor car as the work of a genius in car-building, and find when I get my purchase home that it cannot be made to run, it does not destroy the justice of my complaint to ask whether I could build a better one or not. The important thing is that the car is not what it should be, and judging by the product the builder is not what he is represented to be either. Dr. Martineau was far too keen a controversialist to adopt Canon Green's foolish retort, but he does seek to parry the force of the atheist criticism by saying that God "if once he commits his will to any determinate method, and for the realisation of his ends selects and institutes a scheme of instrumental rules, he thereby shuts the door on a thousand things that might have been done before." (_Study_, p. 85). To that one may reply, so much the worse for his judgment; while if the fact of his having once adopted a "determinate method" caused him to resolve to stick to it, in spite of its consequences in practice, and irrespective of the beneficial results that might have followed its modification, we can only regret that the deity was not acquainted with Emerson's opinion that "a foolish consistency is the bugbear of little minds." Even what is said to be the greatest mind of all might easily have benefited from the warning.

Canon Green tries another line of reply, which is not in the least more convincing. He pictures to us a father who, by misappropriating trust funds, brings disgrace to the whole of his family. The mother is driven to despair and drink. The sister dies for want of food, the brother

finds his career ruined. The disaster is complete, and Canon Green says it is inevitable because we cannot have a world in which the relations of parents and children exist without having them suffer from each other's faults. So far as the present world goes that is true. But it is certainly a strange reply to the complaint that an arrangement is unjust to say that as the injustice results from the arrangement, therefore, we have no cause for complaint. And that _we_ are unable to make a better world is beside the mark. Between the perception of an injustice, and the ability to remove it there is a world of difference, and although we may be unable to remedy the defect the defect remains.

But, indeed, human nature does try to produce a world in which such happenings as those depicted shall either not occur or their consequences shall be reduced to a minimum. We do not hang a son for his parents' crime, nor do humane people blame children for the shortcomings of their parents. To some extent we try to correct the consequences that follow, and even though the endeavour be futile, that is in itself an indictment of the existing order. Man does at least try to correct the injustices his God is said to have created.

It is overlooked also that the evils which follow from wrong actions are not confined to those immediately connected, and who may conceivably have their resentment to some extent dulled, if not lessened, by that fact. People in no way connected, and who can have no perception of the cause of their suffering, who are unconscious of everything, save the one fact that they are suffering, feel its consequences. When a great war spreads devastation all over the world, can it be said that any useful purpose is served by the sufferings of millions who are not in the slightest degree aware of the cause of their agony? When a shady financial operation brings an innocent man to ruin, and effects all the consequences which Canon Green imagines resulting from the defaulting parent, how can it be said that the catastrophe admits of ethical justification? In many cases the thought of the injury experienced acts itself as a fresh cause of degradation. It creates a rankling and a bitterness which depresses and inhibits the power to struggle, unless it be the desire to struggle for revenge against a condition of things of which the evil results are only too apparent. People are not merely punished for the evil they do; they are punished for the evil that others do, and the punishment, so far as we can see, bears no observable relation to the wrong done. There is no _ethical_ relation between actions and consequences. Not alone is the incidence of an action dependent upon personal qualities--some will suffer more from having accidentally told an untruth than others will suffer from having committed gross and deliberate fraud--but nature is absolutely careless of whether what I do is motived by good or bad intentions. If I get a wetting through going out to help some one in distress, the consequences will be exactly the same as though I had got wet going out to commit a burglary or a murder. And when Dr. Martineau talks of the "natural penalties for guilt," and adds that "sin being there, it would be simply monstrous that there should be no suffering and would fully justify the despair which now raises its sickly cry of complaint against the retributory wretchedness of human transgression" (_Study_ II., p. 106), the reply is that there are no such things as "_natural_ penalties for guilt." There are only consequences of actions, and they are the same whatever be the moral quality of the actions performed. In the same way that nature may in the course of an earthquake destroy the homes of a dozen worthy families and leave a gambling hell untouched, so it will in other directions punish where a man, from good intentions, places himself in the path of punishment, and refrain from afflicting one whose selfishness or greed has guarded him against attack. There are natural consequences of actions, there are no natural penalties for guilt, and there are no natural rewards for innocence. Rewards and penalties are the creation of man, and it is only in the form of a figure of speech that we can apply them to nature.

It is equally idle to speak of pain as a form of discipline. Professor Sorley says that if the pain in the world can be turned to the increase of goodness, then its existence offers no insuperable objection to "the ethical view of reality." So Dr. Martineau says that suffering is "the moral discipline" through which our nature arrives at its "true elevation." It is needless to multiply quotations; such statements are the commonplaces of theistic controversy, and almost any book that one cares to pick up will supply further illustrations, if they be required. None can reject them, because no theist can afford to candidly admit

that the world we know offers no justification for his belief. The belief in the goodness of God, as Canon Green says, is a belief that is "absolutely fundamental to all religion," and if the facts as we see them do not support the belief, some apology must be found that will marry the theory to the fact.

Nevertheless, the belief in the disciplinary power of pain or suffering is, if not quite illusory, so nearly so that it is useless for the purpose for which it is brought forward. In the first place, it does not require very profound study to see that whatever are the lessons taught by suffering they are seldom proportionate to the conduct which cause them, nor do those who suffer reap the alleged disciplinary benefit of their suffering. Let us take a common case. A mother goes out and leaves a child near an unguarded fire. The mother returns to find the child burned to death. Where is the discipline here? Certainly the child cannot have gained any. But there is, of course, the mother. The mother has learned such a lesson that she will never forget it, and will never again commit the same blunder. There we have it. A child is allowed to die by a hideously cruel death in order that a mother may learn a lesson in carefulness. It is good to learn from other sources that God's ways are not our ways. A man who tried to imitate them, and who burned one of his children in order to teach its mother how to look after the rest, would soon find himself in the criminal court, or in an asylum. But what would be insanity or criminal cruelty in the case of man, becomes, in the alembic of religious apologetic, goodness and wisdom in God.

The theory that it is the function of pain to elevate and to discipline is simply not true. One has only to look to see that in countless cases the effect of pain is disaster. The world's best work is not born of pain but of pleasure. There is no pain and no suffering, there is hardly even toil, in the work of a genius. In all the higher walks of music, of art, of literature, the work is perfect in proportion as the worker finds himself in agreeable and pleasant surroundings. And what is true of the higher aspect of art is true also of life in general. Life may be lived in spite of pain, as good work may be done in spite of discouraging circumstances, but one might as well talk of a plant flourishing because of poor soil, or sharp frosts, as to speak of life becoming better because of pain.

The normal function of pain is to depress, that of pleasure is to heighten. As Spencer said, every pain lowers the tide of life; every pleasure raises the tide of life. It is one of the commonest of sights to see those suffering from illness becoming more self-centred, less careful of others, and to see the disintegrating consequences of disease on character. Here and there one may find a character that has had its rough edges smoothed down by suffering, but for every case of that kind one may find a score of an opposite order. It is not the underfed, badly clothed, neglected child that is likely to make the best citizen, but the one that has the best chance of developing itself in healthy surroundings. And it is a curious commentary, if it were true, to argue that a good and wise God so arranged things that pain and suffering, even undeserved suffering, should be the main way for the development of character.

A strange but not uncommon argument is used by Canon Green in dealing with the suffering incidental to the various disasters that overtake mankind from time to time. Suffering, he says, has a certain element of martyrdom about it. Even evils due to human greed and carelessness bring some benefit in their train. Thus, apropos of the _Titanic_ disaster:--

> Every such disaster tends to produce some improvement for future generations. Shipowners are forced to supply more boats, wireless instalment is required on all ships; the idle rich are led to think less of saving useless time and more of saving lives, their own and those of men in the stokeholds. In a sense those who perish may be said to be unwilling martyrs who by their deaths purchase some advantage for others. It will be said that it is a great price to pay for a small advantage, and one which might have been cheaply gained in some other ways. That is so. But so too the ways of nature are cruel. So many seeds must be sown, so many young animals or birds or fishes born, so many must be trampled out of existence, that only the best may survive. (_Problem of Evil_; pp. 163-4).

That certainly puts all the owners of slum property, all the grasping shipowners, all those who batten and fatten on other people's welfare in a most favourable light. We have been thinking them almost criminals when they were in reality public benefactors. They lead to many improvements, and even though the improvements come too late to benefit those who suffer from the evils, yet they do come--sometimes. Certainly it might give some comfort if the sufferers knew what it was they were being sacrificed for, and that others would be benefited by their death. But they do not, and we are therefore bound to conclude that whatever satisfaction is felt is by those who survive. When a _Titanic_ sinks it must be the people on shore who see the element of goodness in it since it makes travelling easier for _them_. And the kindness developed in one who can excuse the brutalities of nature because it brings some benefit to himself is of a rather startling nature.

The fundamental fault in all reasoning of this order lies in the assumption that pain ceases to be pain if it can be shown to bring good to _some_ one. But that it not so. Pleasure and pain are not quantitative things, increments of which can be carried on from generation to generation and a balance struck at the end, much as one strikes a balance between the profits and losses of a year's trading. All suffering and all enjoyment are of necessity personal. Suffering is not increased by extending it over a million instances. There was not more pain because a larger number happened to be be killed in the European war than are killed in a borderland skirmish. There were a larger _number_ of people involved in the one case than in the other, but that is all. Multiplying the number of cases makes a greater appeal to a sluggish imagination, but it adds nothing substantial to the fact. Feeling, whether it be pleasant or painful, is a matter of individual experience, and that being so it is not the number of people who suffer through no fault of their own, and, so far as one can see, without any benefit proportionate to the suffering experienced, but the fact of there being this suffering at all. That is the point the theist must face; it is the one point he systematically avoids.

Another form of the same argument meets us in the familiar plea that bodily pain "sounds the alarm bell of disease in time for its removal." In some sense it may be admitted that a painful feeling, in certain circumstances, does act as a warning that persistence will lead to disaster. But it is not universally true in the sense and in the degree that is needed to justify the argument, and it is a "warning" out of all proportion to the danger faced. In the first place, pain cannot be a warning against disease, it can only be an indication of its presence. It does not warn us against the dangers of a contemplated course of conduct, nor can it tell us what conduct has led to the pain experienced. And in the case of contagious diseases, what amount of warning is there given? In some case the victim is stricken and is dead in so short a time as not to know with what it is he has been afflicted, and certainly without any chance of being warned. What warning is there in the case of a violent poison? Or what relation is there between pains felt and dangers run? The most dangerous diseases may have painless beginnings, and be well rooted in the system before the victim is driven by discomfort to seek medical advice. On the other hand, a corn or a toothache, neither of them very deadly ailments, create pain out of all proportion to their gravity. And if we take the case of excessive cold we have here an instance where instead of pain acting as a warning, the danger just acts as an an�sthetic. The victim is oppressed by drowsiness, sinks into insensibility, finally death. Here it is not the approach of death that is painful, but the return to life, the pain of restoring circulation being very severe indeed.

Fear, which may be classed as a species of pain, appears to act, in the majority of instances, as an enemy, rather than as a friend to the animal experiencing it. Thus Professor Mosso points out that in the animal organism there exists a number of harmful reactions that increase in number the graver the peril becomes. We have all read of the "fascination" of the bird by the serpent, and there are other animals that in the presence of an enemy become so palsied with fear as to become incapable of defence, even that of flight. And with man it is not as the danger becomes most acute that his nerves become steadier and his courage firmer. The opposite is probably more often the case. In all these cases it is as though nature had lured the animal or man into a position of grave danger, and then does its best to divest him of

adequate means of defence against it.

Common sense revolts against the doctrine that pain is a good thing, and the fact of this is everywhere seen in the attempt of man to get rid of it. No one trusts it as a sure warning against disease, no one turns to it as a means of purifying character. All these pleas are the mere platitudes of a religious apologetic trying to harmonise a primitive theory of things with a larger knowledge and a more developed moral sense. Pain and suffering in the world remain facts whether we believe in the existence of a God or not, but we are at least freed from the paralysing horror of the belief that all the suffering and pain in nature is part of a plan. If man realised all that that belief involved it might indeed rob his mind of all strength to struggle against the forces that make for his destruction. Fortunately no race of people could act upon the logical implications of the theistic theory and maintain its existence. In practice, as well as in theory, theism has had to come to terms with facts. And now the series of adjustments have almost reached their end. The belief in God has been traced to its origin, and we know it to have issued in an altogether discredited view of the world and of man. We know that man does not discover God, he invents him, and an invention is properly discarded when a better instrument is forthcoming. To-day the hypothesis of God stands in just the same relation to the better life of to-day as the fire drill of the savage does to the modern method of obtaining a light. The belief in God may continue awhile in virtue of the lack of intelligence of some, of the carelessness of others, and of the conservative character of the mass. But no amount of apologising can make up for the absence of genuine knowledge, nor can the flow of the finest eloquence do aught but clothe in regal raiment the body of a corpse.

FOOTNOTE:

[5] I have discussed this question at length in my "Determinism or Free Will."

Part II.

SUBSTITUTES FOR ATHEISM.

CHAPTER X.

A QUESTION OF PREJUDICE.

It affords some ground for surprise that there should be so great a resentment shown against religious disbelief in general and against Atheism in particular. We have here more than the mere rejection of a theory or view of life. There is a certain emotional resentment, a shrinking from the one who is guilty of disbelief, such as is not explainable on ordinary grounds. The attitude is ridiculous, so ridiculous that many who adopt it are ashamed to openly acknowledge it, but it is there, and its existence calls for explanation.

We believe this is to be found in the peculiar history of the god-idea combined with primitive theories of social life. Like many frames of mind that persist in civilised society, this attitude towards disbelief has its roots in a conception of the world that has been generally discarded and in social conditions that have ceased to exist among civilised people. To begin with, we have the fact that religion dominates the life of primitive man to a degree that is almost inconceivable to the modern mind. The anger of the tribal gods has to be always reckoned with. What they desire must be done, what they do not desire must be avoided. In the next place there exists a very strong sense of collective responsibility. What one member of a tribe does the whole of the tribe is responsible for, both to the members of other tribes and to the gods. We see a survival of this in the reversion to a more primitive state of things that takes place during a war. In some circumstances hatred of the whole of a people with whom a nation is at

war becomes a duty, and all are responsible for the offences of each. So in primitive times an offence against the gods became an act of treason against the tribe. It might expose the whole of the tribe to disaster.

It is not, it must be noted, that primitive man is fond of the gods, or jealous of their honour; he is not any more fond of them than is the modern citizen of the tax-collector. And no one will ever really understand the question of religion until he rids himself of the notion that primitive man spends his time _looking_ for gods or that he is happy in their company. He is simply afraid that a single unruly member may get the whole tribe into a serious difficulty. The savage is severely practical; his conduct rests upon grounds of, to him, the most obvious utility, and his treatment of the heretic leaves little to be desired on the score of effectiveness. The unbeliever is a dangerous person, and he is promptly suppressed. The first heretic died a martyr to the tribe; the last heretic will die a martyr to the race.

Primitive conditions die out, but primitive feelings linger, and although in theory we have reached the stage of believing that each person must bear the consequences of his own religious opinions, the deeply rooted dislike to the man who rejects the rule of the gods remains.

Historically we have also to reckon with the operations of an interested priesthood, but leaving that on one side as a secondary development it would seem that one must trace to some such cause as the one above indicated the deep and widespread dislike to such a term as atheism, even by many who to all intents and purposes are atheist in their opinion. Certainly in this country, where compromise is more fashionable than in many other places, the dislike to the word is partly due to its uncompromising character. It is clear cut and definite. Its connotations cannot be misunderstood by any one who takes the word in its literal meaning. The Theist is one who believes in a personal God. The Atheist is one who is without belief in a personal God. The meaning is clear, and the implied mental attitude is plain. It is opposed to theism, and has no significance apart from Theism. And, as will be seen, when non-theists quarrel with it, it is only because it is mis-stated or misunderstood.

But most people dislike clear cut terms. They prefer to exist in an atmosphere of mental ambiguity and intellectual fog which blurs outlines and obscures differences. Unbeliever is preferable to some, sceptic--presumably because of its age and philosophical associations, is a greater favourite, and Agnostic is more beloved than either--the latter has indeed been pressed into the service of a more or less nebulous "religion." As it is said, "We are all Socialists nowadays," so it is said that we are unbelievers or Agnostics nowadays. But no one says we are all Atheists nowadays. Timidity can find no use for a word of that character. Of course, if a man believes that some word other than Atheism best describes his state of mind, he has a perfect right to select the one that seems fittest. But when one finds non-theists repudiating the name of Atheist with as much moral indignation as though they had been accused of shoplifting, one cannot help the suspicion that the heat displayed is not unconnected with some lurking fear of the "respectabilities." It does seem that while many may have outgrown all fear of the God of orthodoxy, the fear of the god of social pressure remains.

So far as the Theist is concerned it is quite understandable that his objection to Atheism should involve a certain moral element. That would result from what has already been said concerning the cause of the fear of heresy. Still one would have thought that in these days it would require a person of almost abnormal stupidity to assume that disbelief in God has its roots in a defective moral character. The facts would warrant a quite opposite conclusion. In the first place, the rejection of any well-established belief argues a degree of independence of mind that is, unfortunately, not common. The ordinary mind follows the common route. It is the extraordinary mind that strikes out from the beaten path. The heretic, whether in politics or in religion, may be wrong, but there is always with him the guarantee of a certain measure of mental strength that is not, on the face of the matter, present with one who follows the orthodox path. And that in itself represents a type of mind of no little social value. Moreover, I for one, am quite ready to assert that, class for class, the Freethinker does represent a type of mind

considerably above the average. That this is not more generally recognised is due to the policy of the religious advocate in contrasting the uneducated Freethinker with the educated believer.

Secondly, it strikes one as almost insane to assume that in a Christian country Atheism should be professed as a cloak or as an excuse for misconduct. They who talk in this strain greatly undervalue the accommodating power of religion. Is there a single form of rascality known to man for which religion has not been able to provide a sanction? If there is I have failed to come across it. The use of religion made by tyranny in all ages and in all countries is proof of how accommodating it is to man's passions and interests. The picture of the dying murderer meeting his end, filled with the consolation of religion, and certain of his speedy salvation, contains a lesson that all may read if they will.

Error there may be in any case where opinion is concerned, but profession of an opinion that paves the way for suspicion and persecution provides a _prima facie_ guarantee of honesty that cannot be furnished by the advocacy of one that stands high in the public favour. For aught I know to the contrary, every one of England's Bishops may be quite honest men. But there can be no certainty about it so long as the profession carries with it all it does. The dice are loaded in favour of conviction. But the man who faces social ostracism, and even loss of liberty in defence of an opinion, is giving a hostage to truth such as none other can give.

This association of heresy with a defective moral character is a very old game. It has been played by all religions, and, it must be admitted, with considerable success. Writing in the second century Lucian shows us the same policy at work in his day. In one of his dialogues, when the Atheist has refuted one after another the theistic arguments of his opponent, the defender of the gods turns on his opponent with--

> You god robbing, shabby, villainous, infamous, halter-sick vagabond! Does not everybody know that your father was a tatterdemalion, and your mother no better than she should be? that you murdered your brother and are guilty of other execrable crimes? You lewd, lying, rascally, abominable varlet.

That type of disputant is still with us, and is still supporting his beliefs with the same tactics. And it is successful with some. There is a certain snobbishness in human nature that makes it seek the association of well-known names and shun all of those with an unfashionable reputation. To observe the way in which some people will introduce into their conversation, speeches, or writings, the names of well-known men, is a revelation of this mental snobbery. And the moral equivalent of this is the fear of being found in the company of an opinion that has been branded as immoral. Such people have all the fear of an unpopular opinion that a savage has of a tribal taboo--it is, in fact, a survival of the same spirit that gave the tribal taboo its force. It is, thus, not a very difficult matter to warn people off an undesirable opinion. Samuel Taylor Coleridge relates how the clergy raised the cry of Atheism against him, although he had never advanced further than Deism. And it is to his credit that in referring to this charge he said:--

> Little do these men know what Atheism is. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. I repeat it. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist.

And we have also the oft-quoted testimony of the late Professor Tyndall:--

> It is my comfort to know that there are amongst us many whom the gladiators of pulpit would call Atheists and Materialists, whose lives, nevertheless, as tested by any accessible standard of morality would contrast more than favourably with the lives of those who seek to stamp them with this offensive brand. When I say

"offensive," I refer merely to the intention of those who use such terms, and not because Atheism or Materialism, when compared with many of the notions ventilated in the columns of religious newspapers has any particular offensiveness to me. If I wish to find men who are scrupulous in their adherence to engagements, whose words are their bond, and to whom moral shiftiness of any kind is subjectively unknown, if I wanted a loving father, a faithful husband, an honourable neighbour, and a just citizen, I would seek him among the band of Atheists to which I refer. I have known some of the most pronounced amongst them, not only in life, but in death--seeing them approaching with open eyes the inexorable goal, with no dread of a "hangman's whip," with no hope of a heavenly crown, and still as mindful of their duties, as if their eternal future depended upon their latest deeds.

Still the moral cry is too useful with the crowd to lead to the conviction that anything one could say would lead to its disuse. In the dialogue of Lucian's to which we have referred, and after the theist has been refuted by the Atheist, Hermes consoles the chief deity, Zeus, by telling him that even though a few may have been won over by the arguments of the Atheist, the vast majority, "the whole mass of uneducated Greeks and the Barbarians everywhere," still remain firm in their faith. And although Zeus replies that he would prefer one sensible man to a thousand fools, when a case depends upon the adherence of the relatively foolish, numbers will always bring some consolation to the champions of an intellectually distressed creed.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT IS ATHEISM?

Between Atheism and Theism there is no logical halting place. But there are, unfortunately, many illogical ones. Few possess the capacity for pushing their ideas to a logical conclusion, and some position is finally discovered which has the weakness of both extremes with the strength of neither. With many there is vague talk of a "Power" manifested in the universe, and by giving this the dignity of capital letters it is evidently hoped that ether people will recognise it as an equivalent for God. But power, with or without capitals, is not God. It is not the existence of a "Power" that forms the kernel of the dispute between the Theist and the Atheist, but what that power is like. The issue arises on the point of whether it is personal or not. That it is, is what the religious man believes. As Mr. Balfour says, when the plain man speaks of God he means "a God whom men can love, to whom men can pray, who takes sides, who has purposes and preferences, whose attributes, however conceived, leaves the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom he has created." ("Theism and Humanism," p. 21.) What the genuine believer has in view is not the worthless abstraction of a rationalised metaphysic, but the personal being of historic theology.

It is now my purpose to take a few of these substitutes for Atheism by the aid of which some persons seek to mark themselves off from a declared and reasoned unbelief. As outstanding examples of this one may take two men of no less eminence than Herbert Spencer and Professor Huxley. Both of these men have rendered great service to advanced thought, but both have only succeeded in repudiating Atheism by misstating and misrepresenting it. In addition to the service that Spencer unwittingly rendered the current religion by his use of the "Unknowable" (with which we deal fully later), a further help was given by his destruction of an Atheism that had no existence. This remarkable performance will be found in the first part of his "First Principles." Respecting the origin of the universe, he tells us, there are three intelligible propositions--although neither of these, on his own showing, is intelligible. We may assert that it is self-existent, that it is self-created, or that it is created by an external agency. All three propositions, he proceeds to show, are equally inconceivable. The noticeable thing about the performance is that Atheism is identified with the proposition that the universe is self-existent. A very slight

acquaintance with the writings of representative Atheists would have shown Mr. Spencer that "the origin of the universe" is one of those questions on which Atheism has wisely been silent, and it has also insisted that all attempts to deal with such a question can only result in a meaningless string of words. To the Atheist, "the universe"--the sum of existence--is a fact that no amount of reasoning can get behind or beyond. To think of the universe as a whole is an impossibility; while to talk of its origin is to assume, first, that it did originate, and, second, that we have some means by which we can transcend all the known limits of the human mind. The Atheist can say, and has said, with Mr. Spencer himself--whose final statement of Agnosticism differs in no material respect from Atheism, that in discussing the "origin of the universe," we can only succeed in multiplying impossibilities of thought "by every attempt we make to explain its existence." No one has pointed out more clearly than Mr. Spencer that "infinity" is not a conception, but the negation of one. The pity is that he did not realise that in taking up this position he was on exactly the same level of criticism that Atheists have pursued. For them the universe is an ultimate fact; all that we can do is to mark the ceaseless changes always going on around us, and to develope our capacity for modifying their action in the interests of human welfare. Farther than this our knowledge does not and cannot go; and it may be added that even though our knowledge could go beyond the world of phenomena, such knowledge would not be of the slightest possible value.

It may also be pointed out that, just as it is not true that Atheism attempts to explain the origin of the universe, so it is unfair to tie the Atheist down to any particular theory of cosmic evolution. As a mental attitude Atheism is quite independent of any theory of cosmic working, so long as that theory does not involve an appeal to deity. As we shall see, Atheism, from the point of view both of history and etymology, stands for the negation of theism, and its final justification must be found in the untenability of the theistic position.

Rightly enough it may be argued that the acceptance of Atheism implies a certain general mental attitude towards both cosmic and social questions, but the Atheist, as such, is no more committed to a special scientific theory than he is committed to a special theory of government. Of course, it is convenient for the Theist to first of all saddle his opponent with a set of social or scientific beliefs, and then to assume that in attacking those beliefs he is demolishing Atheism, but it is none the less fighting on a false issue. All that Atheism necessarily involves is that all forms of Theism are logically untenable, and consequently the only effective method of destroying Atheism is to establish its opposite.

Professor Huxley's treatment of Atheism proceeds on similar lines to that already dealt with, but is more elaborate in character. Discussing the nature of his own opinions he repudiates all sympathy with Atheism, because:

> "the problem of the ultimate cause of existence is one which seems to me to be hopelessly out of reach of my poor powers. Of all the senseless babble I have ever had occasion to read, the demonstrations of those philosophers who undertake to tell us about the nature of God would be the worst, if they were not surpassed by the still greater absurdities of the philosophers who try to prove there is no God." (_On the Hypothesis the Animals are Automata._)

And on another occasion, replying to a correspondent, he expresses the opinion that "Atheism is, on philosophical grounds, untenable, that there is no evidence of the god of the theologians is true enough, but strictly scientific reasoning can take us no further. When we know nothing we can neither affirm nor deny with propriety." (_Life and Letters_, p. 162.)

Here, again, we have the common error that Atheism seeks in some way to explain the ultimate cause of existence. And this in spite of continuous disclaimers that all search for a "first cause," or for a "cause of existence" is midsummer madness. The fault here, we suspect, is that both writers took their statement of Atheism, not from Atheistic writers

but from their opponents. But it is none the less surprising that it was not recognised that both "a first cause" and an "ultimate cause of existence," are, strictly speaking, theistic questions. I do not mean that these questions may not suggest themselves to non-theists, but that when they are raised clearly and definitely they are seen to belong to a class of questions to which no rational answer is possible. To the Theist, however, the questions arise from his primary assumptions. His theory is one of final causes; his deity is postulated as the cause of existence, and he cannot give up the questions as hopeless without admitting his position to be indefensible. It is quite usual for the theist to propound problems which only arise on his own assumptions, and then call upon his opponents for answers to them, but there is no justification whatever for non-theists playing the same game. Atheism has nothing to do with final causes, and therefore is not concerned with defending its illogicalities. Theism is a doctrine of final causes, and in arguing that it is absurd to express an opinion upon the subject Professor Huxley was adding a good reason in support of the position he believed himself to be destroying.

Huxley's other objection to Atheism is that it perpetuates the absurdity of trying to prove there is no God. How far is that true? Or in what sense is it true? The danger in all discussion on this point lies in our taking it for granted that "God" conveys a definite and identical meaning to all people. But this is very far from being the case. What anyone means by "God" it is impossible to say until some further description has been given. When this has been done, and not until then, "God" may become the subject of affirmation or denial. Until then we are playing with empty words. By itself "God" means nothing. It offers the possibility of neither negation nor affirmation.

Now Professor Huxley would have readily admitted that the truth of a proposition may be denied whenever its terms involve a contradiction. And the ground of this is the sheer impossibility of bringing the terms together in thought. That a circle may be square, or that parallel lines may enclose a space, are propositions the truth of which may be denied offhand. The ground of this is that the conception of squareness and circularity, of straight lines and an enclosed space are mutually destructive, they cancel each other. And so far as Atheism may be said to involve the denial of particular gods that denial is based upon precisely similar grounds. When defined it is seen that the attributes of this defined god cancel each other as effectually as squareness rules out the idea of a circle; either this or they are simply unthinkable. You cannot have an infinite personality any more than you can have a six-sided octagon, nor can you posit an infinite personality without divesting the terms of all meaning.

It may also be noted in passing that both the theist and the Agnostic actually do deny the existence of particular gods without the least hesitation. No rational Agnostic would hesitate to deny the existence of Jupiter, Javeh, Allah, or Brahma. No Christian would hesitate to deny the existence of the gods of a tribe of savages. Even believers in the current theology have evolved beyond the stage of the primitive Christians, who accepted the existence of the Pagan deities with the proviso that they were demons. And it is a mere verbal quibble to say that these people merely deny each other's conception of deity. Each man's conception of god _is_ his god, and to say that no being answering to that conception exists is to say that his god does not exist, and in relation to the god denied the denier is in exactly the position in which he places the Atheist.

So far then the Atheism of each is just a question of degree or of relation. So far as Atheism involves the denial of deity the follower of one religion is an Atheist in relation to the followers of every other religion. Each religion--among civilised people--is atheistic from the standpoint of the followers of other gods. The affirmation of one god involves the denial of other gods. This would really seem to be the historical significance of the term. The early Christians were called atheists by the Pagans, and some of them accepted it without demur. At a later date Spinoza, Voltaire, Paine, and others were called atheists, and the epithet has lost its force to-day only because the evolution of thought has broken down many religious barriers, and is rapidly dividing people into two groups--those who believe in some god and who believe in none at all. Now all that Atheism--conscious and reflective Atheism--does is to carry a step further the restricted denial of the

ordinary religionist. The Christian theist denies every god but his own. The Atheist, seeing no more evidence for the existence of the Christian deity than for the existence of any of the deities discarded by the Christian, seeing, further, that there are exactly the same contradictions involved in assuming the existence of any one of the world's deities, places the Christian deity on the list as among those gods in whose existence he does not believe, and whose existence, so far as it is defined, may be logically denied.

The really distinguishing feature of philosophic Atheism is its comprehensiveness, the ranking of all known deities, big and little, ancient and modern, savage and civilised, gross and subtle, upon the same level. Historically, we see them all originating in the same conditions, passing through substantially the same phases of development, finally to meet with the same fate as civilisation developes. In this respect Atheism has to be considered in its historic developments. It begins, as we have seen in the rejection of a particular god, in favour of some other deity. It is only at a very much later stage that the whole idea of god is subjected to examination and analysis in such a way as to lead to the rejection of the conception of god as a whole. But with that aspect of the subject we shall be concerned later.

But does Atheism deny the existence of any possible god? This question might admit of a simple answer if one only knew precisely what it meant. It is easy enough to understand what is meant by God so long as we keep to any or all of the gods of the world's religions. But what is meant by god standing alone and undefined? Historically "God" means a deity believed in by some people, some where, at some time. And if we put on one side these particular gods we have nothing left that can be either affirmed or denied. God in the abstract is not a real existence any more than tree in the abstract is a real existence. There is a pine tree, a pear tree, an apple tree, etc., but there is and can be no "tree" apart from some particular tree. So with "god." There are particular gods, but if we do away with these, we have no god left as a separate existence. "God" then becomes a mere word conveying no meaning whatever. Atheism does not deny the existence of _a_ god for the same reason that it does not deny the existence of Abracadabra--both terms mean as much, or as little. And it is more than absurd for people who have rejected theism to continue using the word "god" as though it had a quite definite meaning apart from the gods of the various theologies. We have Professor Huxley admitting that "there is no evidence of the existence of the god of the theologians," and we imagine that he would have met the affirmation of their existence with a flat contradiction. At any rate he would have been quite justified in doing so. But when he asserts, with a show of logical precision, but in reality with great looseness, that "it is preposterous to assert that there is no god because he cannot be such as we think him to be," he is using language for which no precise meaning can be found. To be intelligible, the sentence implies that we have some conception answering to the terms used, and this, as we have pointed out with almost wearisome insistence, is not the case. It is not a case of saying to the theist, "I fully understand your hypothesis, but as at present I do not see enough evidence to convince me of its truth or to demonstrate its error I must suspend judgment." We do _not_ understand it. And when we seek to we discover that the terms of the proposition we are asked to accept refuse to be brought together within the compass of a single conception. Suspended judgment where the subject under discussion is understandable is right and proper, but it is quite out of place, and indeed cannot exist, where the proposition before us is void of meaning. In such circumstances suspended judgment is absurd, and it may be added that the affirmation or negation of such a proposition is absurd likewise.

Only one other word need be said on this point. It may be urged that educated believers mean by "God" not the anthropomorphic deity of the theologies, but a personal intelligence controlling things. But this is really not less anthropomorphic than the form in which the god idea meets us in the popular theologies. Its anthropomorphism is only, to unobservant minds, less apparent. The conception of an intelligent, personal being controlling nature is not fundamentally less objectionable than the frankly man-like being of the early theologies. Intelligence, as we know it (and to talk of an intelligence that is unlike the intelligence we know is absurd) is as much a characteristic of human, or animal, organisation, as arms and legs are. Mind, after

all, is only known to us as a function of an organism. That it is more than this, or other than this, is a pure assumption. And to divest "God" of all physical parts, while retaining his functions, is sheer nonsense. There is the personal intelligence of Smith, or Brown, or Robinson, but it is absurd to wipe out all the particular Smiths, and Browns, and Robinsons, and then talk as though their qualities continue in existence. So with God. If we reject all the gods of the theologies one after another, what god have we left to talk about? All we have left is the memory of a delusion.

It is equally fallacious to talk of "God" as an equivalent of force in the abstract, or as the equivalent of some non-intelligent force. This is not what people ever meant, or mean, by god. What religious folk believe in, what they pray to, is a person who can hear them, and who can do things. A god only dimly apprehended may be tolerated, but for how long will faith continue to worship an existence that can neither do nor hear nor sympathise? There is a limit to even religious folly. And even a savage only worships "sticks and stones" _after_ he endows them with life and intelligence.

Finally, if there is one thing clear to the modern mind it is that science has no room in its theory of things for an over-ruling intelligence. Sir Oliver Lodge well sums up the attitude of science in the following sentences:--"Orthodox science shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe, not in touch with anything above or beyond itself--the general trend and outline of it known--nothing supernatural or miraculous, no intervention of beings other than ourselves, being conceived possible." (_Man and the Universe_, p. 14, Popular ed.) Personally, we question whether there are any scientists of repute who really believe in the existence of a personal intelligence above or beyond nature. Some may make professions to the contrary, but it will usually be found that the qualifications introduced rob their professions of all value. Certainly their teaching is destitute of any such conception. Modern scientific thought leaves no room for the operations of deity. The miraculous is generally discarded. Response to prayer is whittled down to a species of self-delusion, to be valued on account of its subjective influence only. The scientific theory of things, incomplete as it may be in many of its details, leaves no room for the operations of a god. Not alone does it leave no room for a god, but if the scientific conception of the world is to stand, then it would be necessary to repeat Bakunine's _mot_, and to say, "If there were a god it would be necessary to destroy him." You simply cannot have at one and the same time a universe in which all that occurs is the consequence of calculable and indestructible forces, the operations of which can be foreseen and relied upon, and a universe controlled by a self-determining deity, capable of modifying the action of these same forces. You may have one or the other, but it is sheer lunacy to imagine that you can have both. Either uniformity with invariable causation, or a world in which every scientific calculation must be prefaced with the "D.V." of a prayer meeting. And the Atheist, who accepts the principles of modern science, says, not merely that he is without a belief in god, but that he fails to see any necessity for his existence, or anything for him to do if he did exist. He passes the gods of the world in review and categorically dismisses each one as a myth. In doing this he has the concurrence of all theists in discarding every god save one--his own. The Atheist simply applies the same rule to each, and metes out the same judgment to all.

CHAPTER XII.

SPENCER AND THE UNKNOWABLE.

We have already referred to the use made by religionists of Spencer's "Unknowable." This theory was not without its forerunners, and in England was already in the field in the teachings of Hamilton and Mansel. Spencer gave it a still greater vogue. As he presented it, it came before the world with all the prestige attaching to its association with one of the most comprehensive of modern thinkers, and one of the most influential in the schools of evolutionary philosophy. It was also connected with a world theory that claimed to be strictly scientific in

its character. It became not only a fashion in certain circles, it founded a school, and gained numerous followers in the religious world. Its author propounded it as a basis on which to reconcile religion and science, and many were ready to accept it as such. Printed in all the glory of capital letters, appearing sometimes as "The Ultimate Reality," sometimes as the "Unconditioned," sometimes as an "Infinite and Eternal Energy," it was equally impressive under all its forms. It provided just that solemn kind of formula that the religious mind is accustomed to hear, and if it was as meaningless as the Athanasian Creed, is was, for that reason, quite as satisfying. It gave all the comfort of a religious confession of faith, and it has been the parent of a whole host of more recent apologies for God.

In itself the "Unknowable" was harmless enough. Its philosophic value is not great, its scientific utility is nil. To say that everything proceeds from an "Ultimate Reality" is not very helpful, and to follow on with the declaration that we know nothing about it, and that it would be of no use to us if we did, does not sound very encouraging. It reminds one of the description of the horse that had only two faults--one that it was hard to catch, and the other that it was no good when it was caught. We repeat with all solemnity the formula that all things proceed from an infinite and eternal energy, and that this is the Ultimate Reality, and then find that in relation to any and every question we are precisely where we were. Its acceptance in certain religious circles, and its use later, may be taken as evidence of the fact that what the pious mind longs for is not sense but satisfaction.

Still there remains cause for wonder that this "Unknowable" should ever have been taken as affording foundation for the belief in deity. The most extreme materialist or Atheist need not be in the slightest degree disconcerted on being told things proceed from an "Infinite and Eternal Energy." It is only what the Atheist has said, minus the capital letters. He has affirmed his conviction, that all phenomena result from the permutations of matter and force, which are eternal because no time limit can be placed to their operations. And you do not add anything material to the statement by printing it in capital letters. That the Spencerian abstraction should have been taken as a substitute for deity proves how desperate the situation is. Drowning men clutch at straws, and a disintegrating deity hopes to renew his strength by the lavish use of capital letters.

For, after all, what the theist needs is, not an eternal energy, but a personality. An inscrutable existence will not do. There is no dispute that something exists. There is no quarrel over mere existence. It is with the nature of what exists and the mode of its operation that the issue arises. The theist needs a special kind of energy, a special form of existence, a special kind of "reality" if his case is to be established. It will not do for Mr. Spencer to assure him that this "Ultimate Reality" is higher than personal. How Mr. Spencer knows that something, the nature of which is unknown, is higher than something else, is more than one can tell. But that does not matter. Higher or lower, it is all the same. Either way it is different from personal, and if it is different it is not the same, it is not personal. Whatever other qualities this "Ultimate Reality" has or lacks, it must have that one if it is to be of use to the theist. And to say that it is higher than personal is to say that it is not personal at all, and to repeat in a roundabout manner what the Atheist has been saying all the time.

What now is Spencer's theory of an ultimate reality that must for ever remain unknowable? Following a line of thought that had been steadily gaining ground since Hume--although much older than Hume--Spencer holds that in final analysis all our knowledge is a knowledge of mental states and their relations. Beyond this we _know_ nothing, and can never know anything. Nevertheless, while we cannot know anything beyond consciousness, the conditions of thinking oblige us to assume that something exists as the cause of our states of mind. Just as black implies something that is not black, hard something that is not hard, so we must conceive, as against the conditioned, relative existence of our conscious states, an unconditioned, absolute existence as their cause. It is this assumed, but completely unknown cause of our conscious states, and of all else, that Spencer distinguishes as the Unknowable, the Unconditioned, the Absolute, etc., and which appears to have brought so much consolation to hard-pressed theists.

I have no intention of discussing here the philosophic value of the "Unknowable." But one may say, in passing, that even from that point of view Spencer is untrue to his own Agnosticism in speaking of the Unconditioned as the _cause_ of phenomena. For causation is a category of the conditioned, it belongs to the world we know. It is not something that exists beyond consciousness, it is something that is supplied by consciousness and which possesses validity only within the world of phenomena. On Spencer's own theory of relativity a cause only exists in relation to an effect. Destroy the one and you destroy the other. Thus, if the Unknowable is a cause of phenomena it ceases to be the unconditioned and becomes part of the phenomenal order. If, on the other hand, it is not part of the phenomenal sequence, it cannot stand to phenomena in a genuine casual relation. It is, however, only fair to point out that between the Unknowable and the evolutionary philosophy of Spencer the only connection between them is that they are both in the same work. In all probability it is an unconscious survival of Spencer's earlier theism, which was active at the time the Synthetic Philosophy was originally planned, but which became more and more attenuated as Spencer grew older, and disappears entirely from the more important volumes of the series. And but for the help it has been supposed to give the belief in god, the "Unknowable" would only have ranked as a harmless speculation of no value to anyone or to anything. This is substantially admitted in a postscript to the 1899 edition of "First Principles." At the conclusion of the section entitled "The Unknowable," he says:--

> The reader is not called on to judge respecting any of the arguments or conclusions contained in the foregoing five chapters and in the above paragraphs. The subjects on which we are about to enter are independent of the subjects thus far discussed; and he may reject any or all of that which has gone before while leaving himself free to accept any or all of that which is now to come.

In other words, the "Unknowable" is a pure abstraction, having no organic connection with the Synthetic Philosophy, or indeed with any philosophy of value. Mr. Spencer's warning to his readers seems to quite justify Mr. Bradley's rather caustic comment, "I do not wish to be irreverent, but Mr. Spencer's attitude towards his Unknowable strikes me as a pleasantry, the point of which lies in its unconsciousness. It seems a proposal to take something for God simply and solely because we do not know what the devil it can be." (Note to p. 128 of _Appearance and Reality_.)

The curious thing is that Mr. Spencer really offers his readers two theories of the nature of religion. One is contained in his "Principles of Sociology," and so far as it traces all religious ideas to the delusions and illusions of the primitive savage is substantially that held by all modern anthropologists. The other is contained in his "First Principles," and the two theories, like parallel lines, never meet. Though born in the same brain they are quite distinct, and even contradictory.

The substance of this second theory may be summarised as follows:--

1. The conditions of human thought compel the recognition of an unknowable reality of which all phenomena are the expression.

2. The function of religion, from the earliest time, has been the assertion of the existence of an unknowable reality, and to keep alive a consciousness of the insoluble mystery surrounding it.

3. The function of science is to deal with the known and the knowable, with all that is presented in experience, with the world of phenomena exclusively.

4. Religion having for its subject matter the unknown and unknowable, while science has for its subject matter the known and the knowable, religion and science are not antagonistic, but complementary. Conflicts only arise when one trespasses on the other's department, and a recognition of the true line of demarcation effectually reconciles these hitherto hostile forces.

A very obvious criticism of number one is in affirming a consciousness of an "Unknowable," its quality of unknowableness is annihilated. Existence can only be predicated of that which affects consciousness in some manner; and so far as I have the slightest apprehension or consciousness of anything existing, to that extent it ceases to be the unknowable. Our knowledge of it may be imperfect or altogether erroneous; we may feel it impossible that we should ever rightly understand it; but so far as we think about it we are bound to assimilate it to the best of our knowledge, even though it be only under the category of force. In brief, "unknowableness" is not a property or quality by which a thing may be apprehended; it is a name for complete mental vacuity. It does not refer to the thing itself, it refers only to us. It is a pure negation which Spencer, by sheer verbal play converts into a quasi-positive conception. A consciousness of things unknown can never be more than a consciousness of ignorance. There is only one way to prove the existence of an unknowable, and that is to know nothing about it--not even to know that there is something about which we know nothing.

But, says Spencer, "to say that we cannot know the absolute is, by implication, to affirm that there is an absolute." Certainly, if we take an infirmity of language to be the equivalent of a necessity of existence, not otherwise. When I say that we cannot know a four-sided triangle I do not affirm by implication that a four-sided triangle exists. I am asserting that the phrase, a four-sided triangle, involves conceptions that cannot be brought together in consciousness, and so dismiss it as being without meaning.

The truth is that every one of Spencer's attempts to prove the existence of an unknowable turns out on examination to be no more than a proof of the existence of an unknown, and this is not disputed at any time or by anyone. Thus, after being told that a known cannot be thought of apart from an unknown, we are informed:--

> Positive knowledge does not, and never can, fill the whole region of possible thought. At the utmost reach of discovery there arises, and must ever arise, the question, What lies beyond? As it is impossible to think of a limit to space so as to exclude the idea of space lying outside that limit, so we cannot conceive of any explanation profound enough to exclude the question, What is the explanation of the explanation?

With this we can all agree, but it does not bring us any nearer an "unknowable." It is perfectly true that thought can never be comprehensive enough to exhaust the possibilities of existence, since it is of the essence of thinking to limit and define. But it is a sheer impossibility to think of what lies beyond the boundary of our knowledge as unknowable, so far as we think of it at all, we must conceive it as the unknown but possibly knowable. The unknown can only be thought of thus because it is only as it is, by assumption, brought into line with what is already known that it can be thought about at all. We are compelled to think of what lies beyond the limits of our actual knowledge in the same way as a traveller thinks of the fauna and flora of an untravelled country. The new region may present many new features, but until actual observation has taken place, these new features will only be thought of as more or less unusual combinations of known animal and vegetable life. They are substantially identical with what is already known.

No stranger notion ever occurred to a great thinker than that religion and science represent parallel and distinct lines of development, each having its own sphere of operation. It is all the more remarkable when we remember that with Spencer "religion" means all religion, past and present, civilised and savage. And no one is more precise in pointing out how all religious ideas find their beginnings in the conditions of primitive life. And that being the case, one wonders whether we are to picture primitive man as a profound metaphysical philosopher, speculating on that which lies behind phenomena, contemplating an "insoluble Mystery," and paying homage to an "Ultimate Reality"? Nothing could be more absurd. Thinking begins in concrete images, not in abstractions. We have only to note the development of intelligence in children to realise this. And primitive man, not being a mystic nor a

metaphysician, bases his religion, not upon a reality that transcends experience, but upon a presumed fact, and what is to him the best known of all facts. And even with modern men it may safely be said that they worship God for what they believe they know about him, not because they believe him to be unknown and unknowable.

Spencer himself may be cited in support of this. In his "Principles of Sociology," where the Unknowable plays no part whatever, he concludes after an elaborate survey of the facts, that the imagination of primitive man is reminiscent, not constructive; his power of thought is feeble, he is without the quick curiosity of civilised man, there is an absence of the conception of causation, he accepts things as they appear, without any vivid desire to inquire into their real nature or their connection with other events, and is without abstract ideas. Clearly, here is not a very promising subject from which to derive even the germ of the idea of a "Reality transcending experience." Spencer also, and quite properly, insists that religious ideas are, under the condition of their origin, national ideas; that we must accept the truth that the laws of thought are everywhere the same, and that, given the data as known to primitive man, the inference drawn by him is a reasonable inference.

With this we agree, but it gives the death blow to the previous statement as to the essential nature of religion, and its essential differentiation from science. For given the constitution of the primitive mind, its ignorance of causation and general lack of knowledge, religion commences not in some search after an eternal reality, but in a natural misunderstanding of observed facts. Primitive religion is just a reasoned misunderstanding of phenomena that in later, and better informed ages, are given an altogether different explanation.

That this is so, Spencer himself makes plain. For he shows, step by step, how the experience of dreams, echoes, shadows, etc., combine to produce the belief in unseen agencies differing in no essential from man save that of possessing greater power and in being invisible. From dreams and other subjective experiences he derives the idea of a double, from death that of a ghost. Hence the ceremonies round the grave, and the attention paid to the double of the dead man, which subsequently developes into ancestor worship. The same train of thought gives a double to objects other than human beings. Hence Animism, Totemism, and their numerous subsidiary developments. Spencer insists, not only that "all religions have a natural genesis," but also that "behind supernatural beings of all orders" there has been in every case a human personality--in other words, every god is developed from a ghost, "ancestor worship is the root of every religion." To this he will admit no exception, and referring to the Jewish religion, he asks contemptuously:--

> Must we recognise a single exception to the general truth thus far verified everywhere? While among all races in all regions, from the earliest times down to the present, the conceptions of deities have been naturally evolved in the way shown, must we conclude that a small clan of the Semitic race had given to it supernaturally a conception which, though superficially like the rest, was in substance absolutely unlike them.

And in about half a dozen pages he shows conclusively that the Biblical God had exactly a similar origin to other gods.

Now if this account of religious origins means anything at all (and in spite of differences between anthropologists it is in substance the account of the origin of religion given by all) it means that instead of religion and science moving along parallel lines, religion is simply primitive science. Religion and science, as a very able theistic writer says, "touch and oppose each other as rival methods of explaining, not solely or mainly the life and nature of man, but the universe taken as a whole, man forming a part of it." (W. H. Mallock, _Religion as a Credible Doctrine_, p. ii.) Both are concerned with the same facts, and their respective claims to consideration depend entirely on their ability to explain the facts. For the reasons given by Spencer, man's earliest interpretation of things is inevitably vitalistic. Ghosts--the primitive protoplasm from which the gods are made--are assumed, and once

assumed dominate the savage intelligence. Fear combines with ignorance to resist any conception that will wrest power from the hands of these extra-natural agents, "Nature's haughty lords," rule all, and their dynasty is the hardest of all to overthrow.

In spite, however, of all opposition the mechanical theory of things develops, and in developing establishes a clear division between the two conceptions of nature. But the line of demarcation is not that stated by Spencer. Religion no more asserts the existence of an "Unknown Verity," than it asserts a fourth dimension of space. Nor is science concerned with denying the existence of something of which we know nothing, and can never know anything. The essential feature of religion is that it offers a vitalistic explanation of the world as against the mechanical explanation offered by science. And in this religion stands for the earlier as against the later expression of human knowledge. It is the eternal champion of savage thought against civilised intelligence. Its whole significance lies in the persistence of animistic modes of thinking under civilised conditions.

This conclusion, be it observed, is one that is quite borne out by Spencer's own explanation of the nature of religion. Nor do we know of a more remarkable instance of a front rank thinker propounding in one part of his work a theory bearing no relation whatever to the remaining portion, and in addition disproving his own theory at every point.

Spencer's reconciliation of science and religion, which in one form or another is continually in evidence, is only one degree less remarkable than the fact of its being accepted by so many religionists as satisfactory. Following the line of his untenable theory that religion and science pursue parallel lines, he points out that "the agent which has effected the purification (of religion) has been science." That is, the growth of the mechanical theory has driven back the vitalistic one. This is purification only in the sense that a defaulting cashier purifies the firm he robs. "As fact or experience proves that certain familiar changes always happen in the same sequence, there begins to fade from the mind the conception of a special personality to whose variable will they were before ascribed." This process of annexation is, says Spencer, science teaching religion its true function. As a matter of fact, science has given religion no instruction, it has merely issued prohibitions. It has warned religion that there are certain things it must not meddle with, certain departments on which it must not encroach. In this way religion has been forced farther and farther back, until it is left with what? Not with anything that can be known, or is known; it is left supreme in the kingdom of nowhere, ruling over an empire of nothing at all. And so long as religion strives for a more tangible possession so long must there be a conflict between science and religion. But--"as the limits of possible cognition are established, the causes of possible conflict will diminish. And a permanent peace will be reached when science becomes fully convinced that its explanations are proximate and relative; while religion becomes fully convinced that the mystery it contemplates is ultimate and absolute." So, when science has monopolised the entire field of human knowledge, actual and possible, and when religion is satisfied that it knows nothing, and never can know anything of the object of its worship, that it can offer nothing in the shape of counsel or advice, but that its function is to sit in owl-like solemnity, contemplating nothing, meanwhile offering man an eternal conundrum that he must everlastingly give up, then, and not till then, there will be peace between science and religion. And this is called a reconciliation. Mr. Spencer finds two combatants engaged in deadly conflict, he murders one and offers the other the corpse, with the hope that now they will live peacefully together. The scientist is asked to be content with all there is. The religious man is asked to find comfort in the reflection that science must eventually monopolise the entire field of knowledge, but that, in return, religion will be left free to work in an unknowable region, to occupy itself with an unknowable object, and to eternally cry "all is mystery" in an amended philosophic version of the Athanasian Creed.

As a piece of humour this is superb. So also is the following: "Science has been obliged to abandon the attempt to include within the boundaries of knowledge that which cannot be known, and so has yielded up to religion that which of right belonged to it." Capital! Science gives up to religion that which cannot be known, and as it does not know what it is, that cannot be known, it surrenders to religion absolute vacuity as

the proper sphere for its operations. And even this is accompanied with the proviso that if it happens to have made a mistake, the ceded territory will be at once reclaimed. Science would certainly be vindictive if after having murdered religion it declined to live peaceably with its corpse.

The distinction between science and religion is, in truth, neither fundamental nor original. It is one that arises gradually in the history of mental development. And, therefore, when a man such as Professor Arthur Thomson describes religion as being concerned with the recognition of the existence of an independent "spiritual reality," the reply is that religion commences as just an explanation of nature in terms of the then existing knowledge and culture. Religion is just a crude form of science. The separation of the world into a religious and a scientific sphere arises when the religious interpretation of natural happenings gets discredited by advancing knowledge. If one takes such an illustration as that of witchcraft the nature of the process is clear. First we have the interpretation of certain forms of dementia and delusion in terms of religion. Later we have the same facts interpreted in terms of positive knowledge and the religious explanation is rejected. And that, in a sentence is the whole history of religion, once we have cleared away the verbiage with which the subject is surrounded.

The truth of what has just been said is often obscured by unintelligible talk of growth in religion. It is claimed that we acquire truer views of deity, and a process of growth is asserted analogous to that which meets us in knowledge in general. Let us see what truth there is in this.

In ordinary instances when we speak of growth we imply one of three things. Either there is increase in size, or there is an enlargement of function, or there is an increase in knowledge. So long as we keep to these plain meanings of "growth" there can be no confusion. But none of these meanings fit the case of religion. Certainly there has been no increase in the size of religion--it does not, that is, cover a larger area. On the contrary it is continually being warned off more and more territory. It becomes more and more a negligible quantity. One need not go back to primitive times to prove this, any country will supply instances. The displacement of religious by other considerations is observable on all sides.

There has certainly been no growth in the functions exercised by religion. Its function as law-giver in the physical world is now definitely abandoned, and all it asks is that science will let it alone. In ethics and sociology it still maintains a precarious kind of an existence, but it no longer claims supreme power. It is content to urge its utility as a source of inspiration, to rank as one among a number of other forces that are frankly secular in nature. Finally there has been no growth in the shape of an extension of knowledge of the object of religious belief. Of the nature of deity we know no more than did our earliest ancestors. In earlier generations the nature of God, his aims and intentions, were discussed with the same degree of confidence that one now sees displayed in discussing schemes of sanitation. The modern believer is now more anxious to impress upon the world how little he knows about God, or how little it is possible for him to know. This is not surprising except in the fact that it is called religious growth. And if this be a sign of growth one wonders what would be considered indications of decay. Historically religious life presents us, not with a process of growth, but one of shrinkage. To reduce the gods from many to few, and from a few to one is not growth. To limit the functions of deity from those of a direct, particular, and universal character, to an indirect, general form is not growth. To refine the idea of a personal deity until it becomes that of a mere abstract force, is not growth. All these are so many modifications of the religious idea under pressure of advancing knowledge--so many attempts to state religion in such a way that it can conflict with nothing we know to be true because it answers to nothing of which we are certain.

The idea of God, the idea of religion, does not begin in a mystery or in some abstract conception, but in an assumed knowledge of certain concrete facts of experience. Man believes in the gods because of what he thinks he knows about them, not because of what he does not know. The talk of a mystery is the jargon of a priesthood which finds it profitable to keep the lay mind at a distance. Increased emphasis is

placed on mystery because religious teachers are alive to the danger of basing their beliefs upon matters that can be brought to the test of experience. Mystery mongering is not the beginning of religion, but a sign of its approaching demise. Mysticism, too, is no more than a cover for a sanctuary that has been emptied of all worthy of respect. But if religion is to really live, it must have some knowledge, no matter how little or how imperfect, of the subject with which it professes to deal. A religion that does not possess this, but is compelled to hand over the whole of life to secular science, signs its own death warrant. It commits suicide to save itself from execution. And as people realise this they turn to clear-eyed science for guidance, leaving religion to such representatives of primitive animism as still survive in a civilised community.

CHAPTER XIII.

AGNOSTICISM.

The primary difficulty in dealing with Agnosticism is its elusive character. It is a word of various and vague meanings, and many of those who use it seem to have no great anxiety to fix its meaning with any degree of precision. It is used now in a philosophic and now in a religious sense, and its use in the one connection is justified by its use in another. It has become, in the half century of its existence, as indefinite as "religion," and about as enlightening. On the one side it appears as a counsel of mental integrity with which everyone will agree, and on the other, the religious side, it will vary from a form that is identical, with that much-dreaded "Atheism," to a religious or "reverent" Agnosticism that reminds one--mentally and morally--of Methodism minus its creed. Indeed, to say that a man is an Agnostic nowadays tells one no more than calling a man religious indicates to which one of the world's sects he gives his adherence.

The only aspect of Agnosticism that we are here vitally concerned with is its relation to religion, or specifically with the god-idea. But it will be necessary to say a word, in passing, on at least one other phase.

And first as to the origin of the term. The credit for the first use of the term has always been given to the late Professor Huxley. Mr. R. H. Hutton says that Huxley first suggested the word at a meeting of friends in the house of Mr. James Knowles in 1869. Professor Huxley says that he deliberately adopted it because, "When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist, or a pantheist; a materialist, or an idealist, a Christian, or a freethinker, I found that the more I learned and reflected the less ready was the answer, until at last I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations except the last.... So I took thought and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of 'agnostic.'" And he goes on to explain that the term was used as antithetical to the "gnostic" of Church history who knew all about things of which Huxley felt himself in ignorance. To all of which one may say that Huxley appears to have given himself a lot of needless trouble. In philosophy there was the term "Sceptic," and in relation to religion the term "Atheist" was ready to hand. The latter term certainly covered all that Huxley meant by Agnosticism as applied to the god-idea. The plain, and perhaps brutal truth, is that Huxley was just illustrating the fatal tendency of English public men to seek for a label that will mark them off from an unfashionable heresy even more clearly than it separates them from a crumbling orthodoxy. It is certainly suggestive to find, in this connection, a French writer of distinction, M. Emile Boutmy, pointing out that in France, Spencer, Mill, and Huxley would all have been professed atheists. (_The English People_, p. 44.) But France is France, and has always possessed the courage to follow ideas to their logical conclusion.

When it comes to a definition of Agnosticism Professor Huxley's position becomes still more difficult of understanding. Agnosticism, he says, is a method the essence of which may be expressed in a single principle. "Positively the principle may be expressed; in matters of the intellect

follow your reason so far as it will take you without regard to any other consideration. And negatively; in matters of the intellect, do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable." So far as this goes we have here perfectly sound advice. But why call it Agnosticism? It is no more than the perfectly sound advice that we must be honest in our investigations, and make no claim to certainty where the conditions of certainty do not exist. But we have no more right to call this Agnosticism than we have to give the multiplication table a sectarian or party label.

Nor do we believe for a moment that what Huxley had in view, or what other agnostics have in view, is no more than a counsel of intellectual perfection. What is really at issue here is one's attitude of mind in relation to the belief in God. It is in pretending to know about God that the theist finds himself at issue with the Agnostic, and it is to mark himself off from the theist that the Agnostic gives himself a special label. And the trouble of the Agnostic is that so soon as he begins to justify his position, either he states the atheistic case or he fails altogether to make his case good.

There is, perhaps, one other topic on which agnosticism may be professed, and that is in connection with the question of what is known as the problem of existence. We may profess our belief in the reality of an external world, but deny that any _knowledge_ of it is possible. Here we assert that what "substance," or "reality," or "thing in itself," is we do not know and cannot know. But while many attempts are made under the name of "the Absolute," etc., to identify this with "God," it is really nothing of the kind. The belief or disbelief in an external "reality" is a problem in philosophy, it has no genuine connection with theology. To identify the two is a mere dialectical subterfuge. Mere existence is an ultimate fact that must be accepted by all. It is only on the question of its nature that controversy can arise.

Whatever may be claimed on behalf of Agnosticism, it certainly cannot be claimed that it carries a clear and a definite meaning. As we have seen, Professor Huxley used the word to indicate the fact that he was without knowledge of certain things. But what things? To answer that we have to go beyond the word itself--that is, we have to define the definition. As it stands we may profess agnosticism in relation to anything from the prospects of a general election within a given period to the question of whether Mars is inhabited or not. If, then, it is said that what is implied is that the Agnostic is without a knowledge of God, or without a belief in God, the reply is that is exactly the position of the Atheist. And there was no need whatever to coin a new word, if all that was wanted was to express the atheistic position. Still less justifiable was it to proceed to misinterpret Atheism in order to justify a departure that need never have been made.

One cannot at this point forbear a word on Mr.--afterwards Sir--Leslie Stephen's curious justification of his choice of the word Agnosticism. After the enlightening remark that the word "Atheist" carries with it an unpleasant connotation, he says:--

> Dogmatic Atheism--the doctrine that there is no God, whatever may be meant by God--is to say the least of it a rare phase of opinion. The word Agnosticism, on the other hand, seems to imply a fairly accurate appreciation of a form of creed already common and daily spreading. The Agnostic is one who asserts--what no one denies--that there are limits to human intelligence. (_An Agnostic's Apology_; p. 1).

And he then goes on to assert that the subject matter of theology lies beyond these limits.

Now putting on one side this perversion of the meaning of Atheism, was it really worth while to coin a new word to affirm what no one denies? Theists do not deny the limitations of knowledge, on the contrary, they are always affirming it. Neither do all theists deny that "God" is unknowable. That has been affirmed by them over and over again. What they have claimed is that "God" is apprehended rather than known, and they affirm his existence on much the same grounds that others assert the real existence of an external world. Professor Flint's comments on

Stephen's performance are quite to the point, and the more noteworthy as coming from a clergyman. He says:

> The word Atheist is a thoroughly honest, unambiguous term. It means one who does not believe in God, and it means neither more nor less. It implies neither blame nor approval, neither desert of punishment nor of reward. If a purely dogmatic Atheism be a rare phase of opinion critical Atheism is a very common one, and there is also a form of Atheism which is professedly sceptical or agnostic, but often in reality dogmatic or gnostic. (_Agnosticism_; p. 69).

The more carefully one examines the reasons given for the preference for the word Agnosticism, the clearer it becomes that the real motive is not the wish to obtain mental clarity, but the desire to avoid association with a term that carries, religiously, disagreeable associations. The care taken by so many who call themselves Agnostics to explain to the religious world that they are not atheists, is almost enough to prove this. Indeed, the position is well summed up by Mr. John M. Robertson:--

> The best argument for the use of the name Agnostic is simply that the word Atheist has been so long covered with all manner of ignorant calumny that it is expedient to use a new term which though in some respects faulty, has a fair start, and will in time have a recognised meaning. The case, so stated, is reasonable; but there is the _per contra_ that whatever the motive with which the name is used, it is now tacked to half a dozen conflicting forms of doctrine, varying loosely between Theism and Pantheism. The name of Atheist escapes that drawback. Its unpopularity has saved it from half-hearted and half-minded patronage.

So that, on the best showing, we are to take "Agnostic" on the professed ground that it is more exact than "Atheism," but on the real ground that it is less unpopular, waiting meanwhile for the time when it shall have become more exact than it is by becoming accepted in the same sense as the Atheism that has previously been rejected. Courage and straightforwardness saves a lot of trouble.

Mr. Bailey Saunders (_Quest of Faith_, p. 7) calls agnosticism "a plea on behalf of suspended judgment," and this is a favourite expression. It gives one an air of impartiality, with the comforting reflection that it will please the socially stronger side. But suspended judgment on what? To hold one's judgment in suspense implies that we have at least a workable comprehension of the subject in dispute, and that judgment is suspended because the evidence produced is not adequate to command decision. But is that the case here? Does the Agnostic claim that the evidence produced by the theist is merely inadequate, or that it is irrelevant? Surely he holds the latter position. And if that is the case, then he does not suspend judgment, for the simple reason that there is no case made out concerning which judgment is to be suspended. There is simply no case before the court. For the Agnostic, no more than the Atheist, can attach no intelligible meaning to "God." He must have it defined to understand it, and when it is defined he rejects it without ceremony. And it is quite obvious that when an Agnostic says, "I know nothing about God," he means more than that; otherwise it would not be worth the saying. He really means that no one else knows either. He asserts that a knowledge of god is impossible to anyone, because it does not present the possibility of being known. "God," standing alone is a meaningless word, and how can one suspend judgment concerning the truth of an unintelligible proposition?

For here are the plain facts of the situation. If we ask the Agnostic whether he suspends judgment concerning the existence of the gods of any savage peoples, the reply is in the negative. If we put the same question concerning the god of the Bible, or of the Mohammedan, or of any other of the world's theologies we receive the same answer. There is nothing here to suspend judgment about, the characters and qualities of the gods being such that there admits of no doubt as to their imaginary character. Or if it is said that the Agnostic, while dismissing the gods of the various theologies, savage and civilised, as being impossible,

suspends judgment as to the existence of a "supreme mind," or of a "creative intelligence," the reply is that one cannot suspend judgment as to the possible existence of an inconceivability. For "mind" must be mind, as we know it. And it is a downright absurdity to speak of the possible existence of a "mind" while divesting it of all the qualities that characterise mind as we know it. Really between the statement that A. does not exist, and the affirmation that A. does exist, but differs in every conceivable particular from all known A.'s there is no difference whatever. We are denying its existence in the very act of affirming it.

Further, we quite agree with Mr. F. C. S. Schiller (_Riddles of the Sphinx_, pp. 17-19) that in practice such suspense of judgment is impossible. We suspend our judgment as to whether we shall die to-morrow or at some indefinite future date, and for that reason we make our arrangements in view of either contingency. We suspend judgment as to the honesty of an employee, and our attitude towards him is governed by that fact. And so with the question of a god. In one way or another we are bound to indicate our judgment on the subject. We must act either as though we believe in the possibility or in the impossibility of "divine" interference. If the mental hesitancy of the respectable Agnostic were accompanied by a corresponding timidity in action life would be impossible.

A less common plea on behalf of Agnosticism, but one on which a word must be said, is that the agnostic attitude is more "reverential" than that of atheism. But why in the name of all that is reasonable should one profess reverence towards something of which one knows nothing? Reverence, to be intelligible, must be directed towards an intelligent object, and we must have grounds for believing it to be worthy of reverence. Reverence towards our fellow creatures is a reasonable enough sentiment, but what is there reasonable in an expression of reverence towards something that can only be thought of--and even this is unwarranted--as a force? The truth is that this expression of reverence is no more than the flickering survival of religion. Numbers have reached the stage at which they can perceive the unreasonable nature of religious beliefs, but they have not yet managed to achieve liberation from the traditional emotional attitude towards these beliefs. In other words, the development of the emotional and the intellectual sides of their nature have been unequal, and for these the "Unknowable" has simply served as a peg on which to hang religious feelings that have been robbed of all intellectual support. The semi-religious Agnostic thus represents a transition form, interesting enough to all who observe how curiously decaying types strive to perpetuate themselves, but which is bound to disappear in the process of intellectual evolution.

Finally, one would like from the Agnostic some authoritative announcement as to his position in relation to what is known concerning the origin of the god-idea. So far as professed theists are concerned one expects this to be ignored. On the part of non-theists one expects a more logical attitude. In this case it is common ground with the Atheist and the Agnostic that the idea of god owes its beginnings to the ignorance of primitive man. We know the facts on which this idea was based, and we know that all these are now differently explained. The belief that there is a god governing nature is just one of those blunders made by primitive man, and is on all fours with the numerous other blunders he makes concerning himself and the world around him. Knowing this, and accepting this, believing that "god" springs from the same set of conditions that gave rise to fairies and spirits of various kinds, one would like to know on what ground the Agnostic definitely rejects the grounds on which the idea of god is based, while professing a state of suspended judgment about the existence of the object created by this primitive blunder. It is certainly surprising to find those who accept the natural origin of the god-idea, when they come to deal with current religion talk as though it were merely a question of the inconclusiveness of religious arguments. It is nothing of the kind. The final reply to the arguments set forth on behalf of Theism is, not that they are inconclusive, but that they are absolutely irrelevant to the question at issue. We cannot remain undecided because there is nothing to remain undecided about. We know that the idea of god is pure myth, and was never anything but myth. A belief that began in error, and which has no other basis than error, cannot by any possible argument be converted into a truth. The old question was, "Can man by searching find out God?" The modern answer is an emphatic affirmative. Substantially we

have by searching found out God. We know the origin and history of one of the greatest delusions that ever possessed the human mind. God has been found out. Analytically and synthetically we understand the god-idea as previous generations could not understand it. It has been explained; and the logical consequence of the explanation is--Atheism.

Ultimately, then, we come to this: (1) The Agnosticism that concerns itself with a confession of ignorance concerning the nature of "existence," has no necessary connection with religion, and is only made to have such by a confusion of two distinct things. (2) The plea of a suspended judgment is invalid, since there is nothing about which one can suspend a decision. (3) The Agnosticism that professes a semi-religious feeling of reverence towards the "Unknowable" is fundamentally upon all fours with the religious feelings of the ordinary believer. Worshipping the Unknowable is more ridiculous than worshipping Huxley's "wilderness of apes." The apes _might_ take some intelligent interest in the antics of their devotees; but to print our hypostatised ignorance in capital letters and then profess a feeling of veneration for it is as ridiculous a proceeding as the world has seen. After all, an absurdity is never quite so grotesque as when it is tricked out in scientific phrases and paraded as the outcome of profound philosophic thinking. (4) The only Agnosticism that seems capable of justifying itself is an Agnosticism that is indistinguishable from Atheism. To again cite Professor Flint, Atheist "means one who does not believe in God, and it means neither more nor less." The Agnostic is also one who is without belief in a god, every argument he uses to justify his position is and has been used as a justification of Atheism. Atheist is really "a thoroughly honest, unambiguous term," it admits of no paltering and of no evasion, and the need of the world, now as ever, is for clear-cut issues and unambiguous speech.

CHAPTER XIV.

ATHEISM AND MORALS.

Looking at the world as it is one cannot forbear a mild wonder at the fears expressed at the probable consequences to morals of a general acceptance of Atheism. One would have thought that the world would not run a very great danger of becoming worse on that account, and that, seeing the way in which all forms of rascality have flourished, and still maintain themselves, without in the least disturbing people's religious convictions, one might even feel inclined to risk a change in the hopes of improvement. Mainly, indeed, one might say that those who are affected by religious belief are such as can very well do without it, while those who stand in urgent need of moral improvement seldom show that their religious belief has any very beneficial effect on their conduct.

Yet nothing is more common than to find the theist, when driven off all other grounds of defence, protesting against a deliberate propaganda of Atheism on the ground of its probable harmful consequences to morals. This, not because those who have publicly professed Atheism are open to the charge of loose living, but on account of those who at present believe in religion, and whose loss of belief would possibly upset their moral equilibrium. It is a curious position for a theist to take up, since it implies that while the Atheist as we know him shows no deterioration of character in consequence of his loss of belief, we cannot be so certain of the present believers in deity. They are formed of poorer clay, and once convinced that there is no God with whom they have to reckon, there is no telling what will happen. So we are urged to let well alone, and leave believers with their illusions lest their loss should present us with a very unpleasant reality.

This fear is expressed in various ways, but in one way or another it is tolerably common. The following which reached me from a well known man of letters probably puts the argument as fairly and as temperately as it can be put, and therefore in dealing with that I cannot be accused of taking the theist at an unfair advantage. His conclusions are summarised in the following paragraphs. (The summary is the author's, not mine.)

(1) The decentish code of morals which prevails in this twentieth century is the outcome of all the human ages. From the very first, everywhere and all the time, it has, and continues to be, inextricably intertwined and influenced by Theistic beliefs, even when and where such beliefs have been the crudest and most debased form of polytheism.

(2) The ethical atmosphere in which we now live, after having had such an origin and history, remains strongly and frankly pervaded by religion of a Theistic type. Atheist, Agnostic, and Theist alike have to live in this atmosphere, and consciously or unconsciously, are subject to its influence.

(3) Even if we could set up a wholly secular code of morals, derived entirely from the exigencies of, tribal, communal, and national life, I take it that such a code would be inadequate to form the type of individual character we most admire, and which acts under a sense of "ought" rather than of "must." The latter is often the mere demand of gregarious or individual comfort and convenience; the former may be quite opposed to the inclinations of the individual, and yet bring into play irksome but ennobling springs of action which a purely secular code cannot touch.

Now these statements put the case for the theist as moderately and as well as it can be put, and I think that they are worthy of a little careful examination. It may be observed that there is no insinuation that Atheists are actually worse than other people, only the fear that in the absence of some form of theism the higher ethical motive cannot be roused, and that therefore character will suffer. Well, we are none of us free from the contagion of our environment, and the most powerful influences are often enough those that it would be difficult to specify in any given instance. It is not only that the influence of the higher members of society affect the lower. The lower is not without its influence on the higher. But the question here is not really whether we are all exposed to the general influence of the group to which we belong, that, I think, is undeniable, the real question at issue is whether the determining influence on conduct is theistic or not. And I think it will be found that while the one thing is asserted it is the other that is proven.

So far as the first proposition is concerned it may be taken for granted that our present state is the product of all past evolution, and that in the course of that evolution theistic beliefs have been closely--not inextricably--connected with morals. But this is not alone true of morality, it is true of every branch of human thought and of every aspect of human life. Art, science, literature, have all been closely connected with religious beliefs. Necessarily so. Early human history is spent under the shadow of superstition, and its dominating influence affects the form of every aspect of life. But as the course of development has been to separate the essential from the non-essential and to place most of each department of life on a self-supporting basis, it would not seem an unreasonable conclusion that ethics will follow the same lines. In fact, it is following the same lines. There are few educated people nowadays who would claim that morality cannot exist apart from religion, they are content to say, as my correspondent does, that in the absence of religion belief the higher aspects of morality will suffer.

Our morality, we are told, is the outcome of all the human ages. I go further than that and assert that it is the outcome of all the human and of all the animal ages. There is no break in nature, and to the evolutionist the development of the human from the animal is plain. And it should scarcely need pointing out nowadays that nearly every one of the fundamental qualities of man can be seen in germ in the animal world. I only emphasise the point here because it is so often forgotten that morality is fundamentally the expression of those conditions under which associated life is found possible and profitable, and that so far as any quality is declared to be moral its justification and meaning must be found in that direction. The question of incentive we will come to later; for the moment it is enough to insist upon the fact that morality is fashioned, in its fundamentals, with reference to facts, not with reference to speculative beliefs. Beliefs may influence morality for awhile, but the persistent operation of social selection secures a general conformity between conduct and the conditions upon which life depends. That is the fundamental fact to be remembered in all

discussions of morality, although it is the fact that is most often ignored. Ultimately life determines moral teaching, it is not moral teaching that determines life.

Life not alone determines morality, but it determines religion as well. What else is the meaning of all those discarded forms of religious belief, those bodies of dead gods, that meet the student of history as the remains of extinct animals meet the geologist in his unravelment of the story of the earth's vicissitudes? They are the result of a lack of adaptation to new conditions to which they could not accommodate themselves. Once the gods lorded it over man as the gigantic dinosaur lorded it in his day over lesser animals. And in the one case, as in the other, a change in the environment brought about their doom. Natural selection determines the survival of religions as of animal forms, and a religion to survive must become increasingly utilitarian in character, certainly there is a point beyond which the opposite tendency cannot be carried.

Assume, for example, that a religion existed of a grossly anti-social character, one that teaches doctrines that are subversive of the general social well-being. One of two things must result. If the religion is strong enough to enforce its teaching the society it dominates will disappear, and the religion will die out with it. If, on the other hand, it cannot enforce its teaching, or can get it accepted only in a modified form, then either the religion disappears in its original form, or it is modified to get itself established. To live, religion must establish some sort of harmony between its teachings and the conditions of life. It may retard the development of life, but it must not retard to the point of destruction. This is all that is really involved in what is called the purification of religious teaching. In reality there is no such thing. The purification is a modification, and it is modified in order that it may become acceptable to the society in which it is existing. The ascetic epidemic, the various disgusting sects that have sprung into existence from time to time during the course of Christian history, have all died out from this cause. As with the individual, so with society, the forces of which we are conscious generally move upon the surface. Of the underlying ones we are mostly unaware.

The truth is, then, that behind all our consciously elaborated theories of life there are operative the unconscious or sub-conscious forces of evolution. There is, of course, a certain area of conduct in which speculative opinions play their part, and where actions may be arbitrarily classed as good or bad. But this area is, of necessity, limited, and for the reasons that have been given above. Properly understood morality is not something very abstract, but something that is very concrete. The underlying reason for morality is always the same, and we are compelled to hark back to it for justification. And no rejection of religion can alter the basis upon which morality rests.

The proposition that Atheist, Agnostic, and Theist breathe the same atmosphere and are affected by the same influences is, therefore, one that is two-edged. If our intellectual atmosphere is saturated with religious influences, it is also saturated with social influences of a much more fundamental character, and which have been perpetually correcting religious extravagances. And it is at least open to the Atheist to retort that we have to thank this circumstance that religious beliefs have not been more injurious than has been actually the case. If, for example, the ascetic epidemic of the early Christian centuries had increased in force and had continued operative, European society would have disappeared. That this was not the case was due to the strength of the sexual and social instincts, against which religion was unable to maintain its hold. In the change of opinion over the better way to spend Sunday, or in the decay of the doctrine of eternal damnation, we have the same point illustrated. Right through history it has been the social instincts that have acted as a corrective to religious extravagance. And it is worth noting that with the exception of a little gain from the practice of casuistry, religions have contributed nothing towards the building up of a science of ethics. On the contrary it has been a very potent cause of confusion and obstruction. Fictitious vices and virtues have been created and the real moral problem lost sight of. It gave the world the morality of the prison cell, instead of the tonic of the rational life. And it was indeed fortunate for the race that conduct was not ultimately dependent upon a mass of teachings that had their origin in the brains of savages,

and were brought to maturity during the darkest period of European civilisation.

In dealing with the two first propositions I have, by implication, answered the third--namely, that a wholly secular authentic code of morals would be inadequate to form the highest type of character; it might supply a "must," but it could not supply an "ought."

The first and obvious reply to an objection of this kind is that our working code of morals is secular already. In life, if we observe without prejudice, it is not difficult to see that one's neighbours, friends, social class, etc., have far more force in shaping conduct than speculative theories. In its widest sense natural selection determines what actions shall be declared to be moral. Of this we may take the universal feeling against homicide. This is but an expression of the truth that social life would be impossible were it otherwise. And when we pass from the general to the special we meet with much the same principle operating in society. The average burglar pursues his calling with no special sense of its wrongness, although he may have a keen sense of its dangers. But while burgling with a fairly easy conscience, he does flinch at breaking the code of honour set up by his fellow-burglars. And at the other extreme we have the "gentleman" with his code of honour which forbids him not to pay a gambling debt, but takes no count of keeping a poor tradesman out of his money. In each of these cases the determining factor is not theory but fact, and the fact here is association with our fellow countrymen or with a special social class. Morality, in short, is social or nothing. Moral laws are meaningless apart from social life. Every moral command implies the existence of a social medium, and it is no more than a study in history to see how this social medium has been continuously shaping and reshaping human nature. The determination here is not conscious, but it is real, however much disguised it may be by various forms or theories. And when we realise this, it is no more than a truism to say that a change in religious belief can no more destroy morality than a change in government can destroy society.

But in saying that the essence of morality is unreasoning I do not mean that it is unreasonable. All I mean is that it can receive a reasonable justification, and that no matter how lofty the development it has its basis in the fundamental conditions of associated animal and human life. We may surround the subject with a vague and attractive idealistic verbalism, but we come back to this as a starting point. The love of family, with all its attendant values, rests upon the fact of crude sexual desire, refined, of course, during the passing of many generations, but dependent upon it all the same. Remove the sexual desire and the family feelings are inexplicable. Thus, the _reason_ for the existence of the sexual instinct is race preservation, but the end has been achieved in a quite unreasoning manner. In the animal world at large there is certainly no conscious desire for the production of offspring, nor is there with the mass of human beings. There is the desire to gratify an impulse, and very little more. And for the strengthening of an instinct there need not be, nor is there, any consciousness of its social value. All that is necessary is that it shall be useful. Natural selection attends to the rest.

This will, I think, supply an answer to the contention that secular ethics can supply a "must," but not an "ought"; that is, it may show that an individual should act in accordance with his inclinations, but in cases where these clash with the social well being, it can supply no reason why the former should give way to the latter.

The argument rests upon a dual confusion. First, the moral "ought" is no more than an organised and conscious form of "must," and not something distinct from it. One may test the matter by taking a case. A man says, I ought so to work as to promote the general welfare of society. If we seek to find the source of this feeling we come ultimately upon the feeling of tribal solidarity in virtue of which certain tribes survive in the struggle for existence. It is gregariousness struggling into consciousness. The moral "ought" is an idealised form of the primitive tribal "must." And the "must" of primitive life is encouraged and developed because it is one of the conditions of survival.

The second point of confusion is based upon a supposed opposition between individual inclinations and an ideal conception of duty. That

the two are often, as a matter of fact, in conflict, must be admitted. And the cause is that while our inclinations represent a heritage from the past, our ideals are a projection into the future. But the contention is based upon their supposed permanent hostility, and that need not be taken for granted. For the whole course of social evolution tends to bring about a substantial identification of personal and social well-being. More and more as the race develops it is being recognised that there is no real individual life apart from social life, of which it is the creation and the expression. Such antagonism as exists is the inevitable result of a conflict between an organism and its adaptation to a changing environment. And from this point of view the whole growth of man is in the nature of an expansion of his sympathies and sense of duty over an ever-widening area. The primitive egoism of the tribal individual is extended to the nation, that of the nation to the empire, and thence to the whole of humanity. There is no destruction or denial of self in such cases, it is a development of the sense of self over an enlarging area.

Finally, if a secular code of morals will not suffice, it is sheer rhetoric to say that religion is powerful enough to operate where naturalism fails. On the contrary, in a civilised community religious appeals tend to become secular appeals in disguise. On the admission of Christian advocates the two most powerful appeals that can be made are on the one hand, in the name of the fatherhood of god, and on the other, the conception of the Mother and the Child. And what are these but appeals to the secular and social feelings of man in the name of religion? It may be granted that Atheism in its appeals to mankind often fails, but in this respect is it any worse off than religion? Why, one of the standing complaints of religious preachers in all ages is that their message falls so frequently on deaf ears. There is no more certainty that the religious appeal will meet with success, than there is that any other appeal will be successful. And there is the unquestionable fact that morality has become stronger as the power of religion has weakened. The higher qualities have asserted themselves during a period of religious disintegration, and the student of morals sees in this a promise of a further development in the future.

And to all prophecies as to the effects of Atheism on the morality of the future there is the apt reply that they are prophecies and nothing else. And in this respect it is dangerous for the Christian theist to appeal to history. For while the consequences of Atheism can be no more than a forecast, which may or may not be justified, the record of Christianity is before the world. And we know that the period during which the influence of Christian theism was strongest, was the period when the intellectual life of civilised man was at its lowest, morality at its weakest, and the general outlook most hopeless. Religious control gave us heresy hunts, and Jew hunts, burnings for witchcraft, and magic in the place of medicine. It gave us the Inquisition and the _auto da f_, the fires of Smithfield and the night of St. Bartholomew. It gave us the war of sects and it helped powerfully to establish the sect of war. It gave us life without happiness, and death cloaked with terror. The Christian record is before us, and it is such that every Church blames the others for its existence. Quite as certainly we cannot point to a society that has been dominated by Freethinking ideas, but we can point to their existence in all ages, and can show that all progress is due to their presence. We can show that progressive ideas have originated with the least, and have been opposed by the most religious sections of society. What religion has done for the world we know; what freethought will do we can only guess. But we are confident that as honesty is possible without the falsity of religion, as duty may be done with no other incentive than its visible consequences on the people around us, so life may be lived in honour and closed in peace with no other inspiration than comes from the contemplation of the human stream from which we emerge and into which we finally go.

CHAPTER XV.

ATHEISM INEVITABLE.

Between Theism and Atheism the logical mind may halt, but it cannot rest

for long, and in the end the logic of fact works its way. Compromise, while it may delay the end without preventing its inevitability, is quite out of place in matters of the intellect. In the world of practice compromise is often unavoidable, but in that of ideas the sole concern should be for truth. When Whately said that the man who commenced by loving Christianity more than truth would continue by loving his own sect more than any other, and end by loving himself more than all, he placed his finger on the great moral danger of compromise where opinion is concerned. It begins, ostensibly, by considering the respect due to an opponent's case, it continues by sacrificing the respect that is due one's own, and it ends by giving a new sense of value to the very opinion it aims at destroying. "No quarter" is the only sound rule in intellectual warfare, where to take prisoners is only one degree less dishonouring than to be taken captive oneself. And the value of an opinion is never wholly in the opinion itself. No small part of its worth is derived from the way in which it is held, and the importance which is placed upon it.

When Professor Tylor said that the deepest of all divisions in the history of human thought was that which divided Animism from Materialism, he was saying what I have been endeavouring to say, in another manner, in the foregoing pages. Atheism and supernaturalism are fundamental divisions in human thought, and divisions that connote an irreconcilable antagonism. The terms not only mark a division, they are the badges of a movement, the indication of a pilgrimage. Dr. Tylor's own work and the work of his fellow labourers tell the story in detail, and although no one is in a position to write "finis" to it, there is no doubt as to what its end will be. And the manner of the pilgrimage is quite plain. The starting point is the creation by the befogged ignorance of primitive man of that welter of ghosts and gods which make so much of early existence a veritable nightmare. The journey commences in a world in which the "supernatural" is omnipresent, in which man's chief endeavours is given to win the good will or avert the anger of the ghosts and gods to whom he has himself given being. And the end, the last stage of the pilgrimage, is a world in which mechanical operations take the place of disembodied intelligences, or of supernatural powers. From a world in which the gods are everything and do everything to a world in which the gods are nothing and do nothing. The story of that transition is the record of one of the greatest revolutions that has happened in the history of mankind. Its real greatness and far-reaching significance is not always adequately recognised, even by those who welcome it gladly. Indeed, the narrower interests that suffer from this revolution are more keenly alive to its importance than are those who benefit from its consummation. That is, perhaps, what one ought to expect from the known course of human history. For history would not be what it is, nor would reforms be so difficult of accomplishment were it not possible to persuade the slave that his servitude guards him from the very evils it perpetuates.

Incidentally the nature of that revolution has been indicated in the preceding pages. But a more connected view will form a fitting close to this work. Nothing more than the barest of outlines can be attempted, but such as it is it may serve to illustrate the truth that Atheism is more than the speculative philosophy of a few, that it is in sober truth the logical outcome of mental growth. So far as any phase of human life can be called inevitable Atheism may lay claim to being inescapable. All mental growth can be seen leading to it, just as we can see one stage of social development giving a logical starting point for another stage, and which could have been foretold had our knowledge of all the forces in operation been precise enough. Atheism is, so to speak, implicit in the growth of knowledge; its complete expression is the consummation of a process that began with the first questionings of religion. And the completion of the process means the death of supernaturalism in all its forms.

Religion, it has already been said, is something that is acquired, and although that sounds little better than a commonplace, yet reflection proves it to contain an important truth. For it is in the nature of the acquisition that its significance lies. Whatever be the earliest stages of religion it is at all events clear that its earliest form is in the nature of a hypothesis, even though only of the semi-conscious kind that exists when man is brought into touch with some new and overpowering experience. Religious ideas are put forth in explanation of something. But all explanation whether by savage or civilised man, must be in terms

of existing knowledge. No other method is possible. We must explain the unknown in terms of the known, and our explanation will be the more elaborate and the nearer the truth as our knowledge of the nature of the forces are the more exact and extensive. A knowledge of the laws of condensation and evaporation enables a modern to give an explanation of the meaning of a shower of rain that is simply impossible to man in an earlier stage of culture. In every case the facts are the same, and in each case the explanation given depends upon the knowledge acquired.

Now one radical distinction between an early and a modern explanation of the world is that whereas the former moves from within outward, the latter moves from without inward. Uncivilised man explains the world by himself; civilised man explains himself by the world. The savage describes the world in terms of his own feelings and passions, the scientist regards human qualities as resulting from the relation which man holds to the forces around him. The process, while presenting a radical difference in form, is yet fundamentally one in essence. Ignorant of all that we connote by such an expression as "natural forces," whatever explanation is offered by the savage is necessarily in terms of the only force with which he is acquainted. But it happens that the only forces which he then fancies he understands are those represented by his own organisation. What he is conscious of doing is prompted by his own will and intelligence. He hurts when he is angry, he rewards when he is pleased, and he makes the same assumption regarding the things around him. So far as he explains nature he vitalises it. Vital force becomes the symbol of all force. And this result expresses a mental law that is universally operative. The civilised mind differs from the savage mind not because the brain functions differently in the two cases, but solely in consequence of the wider and truer knowledge of the causes of natural phenomena which civilised man possesses. We arrive at different conclusions because we start from different premises. Inevitably, therefore, the first attempt of man to deal with nature takes the form of assuming the operation of a number of personal intelligences. Natural objects are alive, and everything that happens to man, from the cradle to the grave, is thought of as being either alive or controlled by living beings. The world is filled with a crowd of ghostly beings exercising more or less discordant functions. Against this riot of gods the conception of natural law developes but slowly. Quite apart from the natural inertia of the human mind, the fact of questioning the power of these assumed beings involves to the primitive mind an element of grave danger. All sorts of things may happen if the gods are offended, and in self-defence the tribe feels bound to suppress the critic of religion and of religious ideas. But once the step is taken, the area over which the gods rule is to that extent restricted, and with that step Atheism may be said to be born.

What Lange said in the opening sentences of his classic "History of Materialism," that "Materialism is as old as philosophy, but not older," may be said with equal truth of Atheism. That, too, is as old as philosophy, since it begins with man's attempts to break away from that primitive interpretation of nature which sees in all phenomena the action of personal intelligences. It is of no importance in which branch of knowledge the departure was made, whichever department one takes the process can be seen at work. Astronomy appears to have been the branch of knowledge in which the powers of the gods were earliest restricted, although it was not until the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and Laplace were given to the world that "God" vanished altogether from that region. Geology follows with the teaching that chemical, thermal, and other known forces leave nothing for the gods to accomplish. Biology and sociology, dealing with more complex forces, are much later in the field, but they tread the same path. They provide a refuge for "God" for awhile, but it is evident that their complete dispossession is no more than a question of time. And even though the very complex character of the forces working in these latter departments should prevent us ever acquiring the same degree of prevision that exists in other classes, no difference will be made to the general result. The principle will be fairly established and our ignorance of details will no longer be made the ground for assertions which, if made at all, should rest upon the most exact knowledge. "God" will be left with nothing to do, and man will not for ever go on worshipping a God whose sole recommendation is that he exists, nor will the common sense of civilised people hold on to a hypothesis when there is nothing left for that hypothesis to explain.

The single and outstanding characteristic of the conception of god at all times and under all conditions is that it is the equivalent of ignorance. In primitive times it is ignorance of the character of natural forces that leads to the assumption of the existence of gods, and in this respect the god-idea has remained true to itself throughout. Even to-day whenever the principle of "God" is invoked a very slight examination is enough to show that the only reason for this being done is our ignorance of the subject before us. Why does anyone assume that we must believe in God in order to explain the beginnings of life? Why is "God" assumed to be responsible for the order of nature? Why must we assume "God" to explain mind? The answer to these and to all similar questions is that we do not know, in the sense that we know the cause of planetary motions, how these things came to be. It is not what we know about them that leads to the assumption of god, but what we do not know. And the converse of that is that so soon as knowledge replaces ignorance "God" will be dispensed with. It is never a case of believing in God because of the actual knowledge we possess, but always the appeal to weakness and ignorance. From this point of view the colloquial "God only knows!" expresses the appeal to ignorance even more clearly than the elaborate argument of the sophisticated apologist.

This aspect of the matter was well put by Spinoza. Believers in the argument from design, he says, have a method of argument that is a reduction, not to the impossible, but to ignorance. Thus,

> If a stone falls from a roof on to someone's head and kills him, they will demonstrate by their new method that the stone fell to kill the man; for if it had not by God's will fallen with that object, how could so many circumstances (and there are often many concurrent circumstances) have all happened together by chance. Perhaps you will answer that the event is due to the facts that the wind was blowing, and the man was walking that way. "But why," they will insist, "was the wind blowing, and why was the wind at that very time blowing that way?" If you again answer, that the wind had then sprung up because the sea had begun to be agitated the day before, the weather having been previously calm, and that the man had been invited by a friend, they will again insist: "But why was the sea agitated, and why was the man invited at that time?" So they will pursue their question from cause to cause, till at last you take refuge in the will of God--in other words, the sanctuary of ignorance. (Appendix to _Ethics_; pt. 1)

The sanctuary of ignorance "God" has always been, and the sanctuary of ignorance it will remain to the end. It has no other function in life. A consciousness of this is shown by the upholders of Theism in the eagerness with which they welcome every supposed demonstration of the impotence of science, and of the resistance everywhere offered to the development of scientific advance.

So far, then, as the progress of life makes for the growth of knowledge, so far may we safely claim that the development of thought makes for Atheism, as we have just said, and to do the religious world justice it has always been quick to realise this, and every great scientific generalisation--as well as many smaller ones, has been resisted on the ground that they were atheistic in character and tended to take the control of the world out of God's hands. Present-day theists are apt to condemn this attitude of their predecessors, but it can hardly be denied that the logic lies with the earlier representatives. A God who does nothing might, for all practical purposes, as well be non-existent. And a God who is merely in the background of things, who may be responsible for their origin, but having originated them surrenders all control over their operations, is hardly more serviceable. The modern theist saves his God only by leaving him a negligible quantity in a universe he is supposed to sustain and govern.

And it cannot be too often emphasised that the whole basis of exact or positive science is atheistic--that is, it is compelled to ignore even the possibility of the existence of God. Every scientific generalisation rests upon the constancy of natural forces. On no other basis is it possible to give a scientific interpretation to what has gone before or to anticipate what is to happen in the future. Every scientific calculation assumes that in the world with which it deals causation is

invariable and universal. But if we are to assume the operations of a "God" at any time or point every scientific calculation would have to be accompanied with the D.V. of a prayer meeting. To argue from the past to the future would be futile. God might have operated then, no one could be certain he will operate now. Or he might have operated in the far past, but he might not in the future. In either case the assumption of a God would be fatal to exact scientific calculations. Thus in sheer self defence, in order to preserve its character as science, science is compelled to discard even the possibility of the existence of a controlling intelligence. As one eminent theistic advocate admits, "Science has no need, and indeed, can make no use, in any particular instance of the theistic hypothesis."[6] It is only when supernaturalism is partly excluded from human thought that science can be said to really commence its existence; and in proportion as our conception of the universe becomes that of an aggregate of non-conscious forces--or of a single force with many forms producing given results under given conditions, only then does our view of the universe reach completion.

A study of the nature and tendency of human development does, therefore, provide a very strong presumption in favour of atheism. All growth here is in favour of atheism and away from theism. In the beginning we have the gods everywhere and dominating everything. They do everything and control everything. "God" is the one universal primitive hypothesis. And all subsequent development is to its discrediting. There is no growth in the idea of god, there is only an attenuation. The gods grow fewer as the race approaches maturity. Their activities cease as man becomes aware of the character of the forces around him. And it may be further noted that this decline of the belief in deity is brought about as much by sheer pressure of experience as by pure reason. The majority of people do not reason themselves out of the belief in god, they outgrow it. People cease to believe in the gods because they experience no compulsion to believe in them. The logic of fact is ultimately more powerful than the logic of theory, and as environmental forces brought the gods into existence, so environmental forces carry them out again.

Now Atheism does but make explicit in words what has long been implicit in practice. It takes the god-idea, examines it, and explains it out of existence. It admits the reality of gods as it admits the reality of ghosts and fairies and witches. They are subjective, not objective, realities. Atheism takes the god-idea, explains its origin, describes its subsequent development, and in so doing indicates its ultimate fate. In this sense Atheism is, as I have said, no more than the final stage of a long historical process. The theistic phase of thought is an inevitable one in human evolution, but it is no more a permanent one than is the belief in hobgoblins. One might here paraphrase Bacon and say, "A little philosophy inclineth a man to belief in the gods, but depth in philosophy leads to their rejection as a false and useless hypothesis." It is true that thinking brought the gods into the world; it is also true that adequate thinking carries them out again.

The cardinal truth is, of course, that the hypothesis of mind in nature does not owe its existence to an exact knowledge of things but to its absence. Its origin must be sought in a pre-scientific age and its persistence in a number of extraneous circumstances which have perpetuated a belief that would otherwise have inevitably disappeared. And it would indeed be a matter for surprise if this belief--said by theists to be of all beliefs the most profound--should be the one speculation on which savage thought has justified itself. On no other question did the primitive mind reach truth. Universally its speculations concerning the world were discovered to be wrong. On this one topic we are asked to believe that the savage was absolutely right.

From the age of fetichism--rightly called by Comte the creative age in theology--the history of the god-idea has been a history of a series of modifications and rejections. Scarce an invention that has not slain a god, scarce a discovery has not marked the burying-place of a discarded deity. Criticism reduced the gods in number and limited them in power. Advancing knowledge pushed them back till nature, "rid of her haughty lords," is conceived as a huge mechanism, self-acting, self-adjusting, and self-repairing. Even in the mouths of religionists "God" to-day stands for little more than a force. We must not describe him as personal, as intelligent, or as conscious, and between this and the existence assumed by atheistic science it is impossible to detect any vital difference. Atheism, then, takes its stand upon the observed trend

of human history, upon a scrutiny of the facts of nature, and upon an examination of the origin and contents of the god-idea. And upon these grounds it may fairly claim to be irrefutable and inevitable. Circumstances may obstruct its universal acceptance as a reasoned mental attitude, but that merely delays, it does not destroy the certainty of its final triumph.

With the supposed direful consequences that would follow the triumph of Atheism I have not dealt with at length. These are the bugbears which the designing normally employ in order to frighten the timid and credulous. Mental uprightness and moral integrity are certainly not the property of one religion, nor can it be said with truth that they belong to any. And examining the histories of religion it is a fair assumption that in whatever direction the world may suffer from the disappearance of religion there will be no moral catastrophe. Looking at the whole course of human history, and noting how the vilest and most ruinous practices have been ever associated with religion, and have ever relied upon religion for support, the cause for speculation is, not what will happen to the world when religion dies out, but how human society has managed to flourish while the belief in the gods ruled.

Fortunately for human society nature has not left the operation of the fundamental virtues dependent upon the acceptance of this or that theory of the world. The social and family instincts, which are inseparable from our nature as men and women, and which operate in ways of which we are largely unconscious, are the grounds of all the higher and finer virtues, and while a change in opinion may affect their operation here and there, it can never alter their fundamental character. Conduct, in short, comes from life, it is not the creation of a theory to be dismissed by resolution or refashioned by a vote.

What Atheism would mean in practice would be an enormous concentration of energy upon purely human affairs, and a judgment of conduct in terms of human happiness and prosperity. And that certainly furnishes no cause for alarm. It is, indeed, our greatest need. We need an awakening to the untapped power and possibilities of human nature. If the gods die, man their creator still lives; and the creative energy which once covered the face of nature with innumerable gods, which spent itself in the attempt to win their favour, and which called forth a heaven in the endeavour to redress the wrongs of earth, may, if properly applied, yet cover the earth with homes in which men and women, rendered purer by love and stronger by knowledge, will rise superior to the fabled gods before whom they once bowed in blind adoration.

FOOTNOTE:

[6] Prof. Ward "Naturalism and Agnosticism" Vol. I., p. 23.

End of the Project Gutenberg EBook of Theism or Atheism, by Chapman Cohen

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THEISM OR ATHEISM ***

***** This file should be named 25291-8.txt or 25291-8.zip *****
This and all associated files of various formats will be found in:
http://www.gutenberg.org/2/5/2/9/25291/

Produced by Marilynda Fraser-Cunliffe, Martin Pettit and
the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at
http://www.pgdp.net

Updated editions will replace the previous one--the old editions
will be renamed.

Creating the works from public domain print editions means that no
one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation
(and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without
permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules,
set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to
copying and distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works to

protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm concept and trademark. Project
Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you
charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you
do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the
rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose
such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and
research. They may be modified and printed and given away--you may do
practically ANYTHING with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is
subject to the trademark license, especially commercial
redistribution.

*** START: FULL LICENSE ***

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting the free
distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work
(or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project
Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project
Gutenberg-tm License (available with this file or online at
http://gutenberg.org/license).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg-tm
electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm
electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to
and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property
(trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all
the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy
all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your possession.
If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project
Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the
terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or
entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be
used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who
agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few
things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works
even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See
paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project
Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement
and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm electronic
works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation"
or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project
Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the
collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an
individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are
located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from
copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative
works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg
are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project
Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works by
freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of
this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with
the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by
keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project
Gutenberg-tm License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern
what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in
a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check
the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement
before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or
creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project
Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning
the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United

States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the

address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH F3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the

law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at http://pglaf.org/fundraising. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://pglaf.org

For additional contact information:
Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating

charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit http://pglaf.org

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: http://pglaf.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

http://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.